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**Performing Masculinities and Femininities: Grade nine Learners' Construction
of Sexual Identities in the context of HIV/AIDS**

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award of the Degree of Masters of Education**

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DECLARATION

I declare that the conduct and presentation of this research investigation is my own work. This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been cited and referenced.

The data has been gathered with due regard to the research ethics guidelines supplied by the Faculty of Humanities.

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Signature

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Date

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ABSTRACT

HIV/AIDS is a pandemic infecting and affecting people throughout the world. South Africa in particular has recently recorded high infection rates. In response to this high infection rates the government, the medical field, and civil society have joined hands in creating awareness. Despite the publicly reported increasing levels of people infected and living with HIV/AIDS and the HIV awareness campaigns, there are still high percentages of newly infected people. It was thus important to find out why people still engaged in sexual behaviours that put them at the risk of HIV infection.

This study investigated how adolescents construct their sexual identities in the context of HIV/AIDS. It included how they view themselves as sexual beings, how they negotiate and present themselves in relationships. The study also looked at how adolescents perform their femininity and masculinity in the construction of their sexual identities and how this leads to power relation and agency within their relationships.

A qualitative approach of enquiry was used in this study, and data was collected using various methods, such as observation, questionnaires, focus group discussions and individual interviews. The research was undertaken in four secondary schools in the Western Cape, these schools were selected through purposive sampling. One school was randomly selected from each of the ex-houses of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). These were the House of Assembly (for Whites), House of Delegates (Indian), House of Representatives (Coloured) and from Black Schools which were part of the Department of Education and Training (D.E.T). These schools were chosen to have respondents from different socio-economic backgrounds, race and religious affiliation. The researcher worked with a shifting group of grade nine learners in each school, aged 14 to 18 years old. A gendered approach was used in data collection, where the researcher worked with a group of boys and girls separately, as well a mixed group. Face-to-face interviews were also carried out with individual respondents from both groups.

The results of the study reveal that the learners' sexual identities are constructed in contexts where the dominant heterosexual discourses prevail. They are also influenced by their gendered relationships, where they perform their femininity and masculinity in relation to

the 'other'. The results also reveal that there are power relations that exist in relationships and this opens up possibilities of agency.

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CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The category of youth is perceived as a high risk one in society. This is particularly the case now that we have to deal with the challenge of HIV and AIDS. Because adolescence is a period of sexual experimentation, young people are perceived as being highly vulnerable to HIV infection. A large part of the risk is about the challenge they have to deal with in terms of coping with changes in their bodies and their feelings. This challenge involves a search for identity and the need to relate to others in an intimate way. Adolescence is a period typified by feelings of pleasure, desire and becoming a well-rounded person (Coleman and Roker, 1998). Diclemente (1992) adds that it is a period during which many will initiate sexual and drug-related risk behaviours that increase the probability of HIV infection. He describes this period as a time when youth are attempting to establish their autonomy and confront new challenges. He refers to the youth as a generation in jeopardy (ibid).

The vulnerability of young people to HIV infection is complex. It arises out of the fact that most have not yet selected their life partners and are likely to change sexual partners often (Skinner, 2000). Some young people are also at the risk of HIV/AIDS infection because of factors such as substance use and other socio-economic reasons such as poverty. These factors may lead to early engagement in sexual activities in return for money or other favours (UNAIDS, 2000). Risk taking is also influenced by the socio-cultural context in which the youth learn the norms of society, what it expects of them and where they learn about whom they are sexually. Through social interactions, the youth gain culturally informed norms that influence their sexuality and determine their sexual behaviours (Leclerc-Madlala, 2001).

This study seeks to investigate how youth in some areas in the Western Cape construct their sexual identities in the context of HIV/AIDS. The study examines how and what social and cultural practices shape the youths' identity and how they are positioned and are positioning themselves in the wake of this pandemic.

1.2 BACKGROUND

HIV/AIDS is a dangerously health threatening disease because it progresses slowly in peoples' bodies with few if any symptoms until the transition to AIDS occurs (DOH, 2003). Once a person is infected with HIV there are various opportunistic infections or diseases that pose a challenge to sophisticated modern drugs. The pandemic also changes the way we live, love and die as it affects not only the individual and his or her community, but also the beliefs, values and systems that glue cultures together (DOE, 2002). The scale of this devastation is compounded by the fact that there is still no cure for the disease.

HIV/AIDS is a pandemic that infects people of different ages, race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and religion. It is a disease that has the ability to cross social, cultural, economic and political borders (Baer, 1997). It involves feelings and experiences of exclusion, panic, fear and denial much as have diseases such as leprosy, syphilis, cholera and tuberculosis (Silin, 1995:13). HIV/AIDS is a worldwide problem as statistics reveal that in 2003, about 37.8 million adults and children were living with HIV/AIDS and an estimated 4.8 million people were newly infected with HIV (UNAIDS, 2004). There are increasing numbers of people living with HIV/AIDS throughout the world. The percentages of AIDS-related deaths have also increased. In 2003, an estimated 29 million people died from HIV/AIDS related diseases and according to the UNAIDS (2004) report, this number had increased by over 20 million after the first cases of AIDS were identified in 1981. Throughout the world high levels of HIV infection are found among people aged 15-49 (ibid).

While HIV/AIDS is a worldwide problem, it has not affected countries in the same kind of way. Some regions are more affected than others. About 37.8 million people are said to be infected with HIV/AIDS around the world. This is arguably just over 10% of the world population. Of this infected population, two-thirds (about 26.6-million) are found in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS, 2004). Thus Sub-Saharan Africa is the hardest-hit. It is estimated that out of the 4.8 million newly infected people worldwide in 2003, three million were from Sub-Saharan Africa. The majority of the new infections in the region are among young people aged 15-24 years. It is estimated that more than 60% of the boys aged fifteen today will become infected with HIV during their lifetime in countries like Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe (UNICEF, 2002). The region remains the worst

affected as data from selected antenatal clinics in 2002 showed that HIV prevalence was over 25% compared to 5% in 1990 (UNAIDS, 2004). High HIV prevalence was among pregnant women aged 15-24 and among this age group 6.9% of women and 2.1% of men were living with HIV at the end of 2003 (UNAIDS, 2004). This means that Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, faces major challenges in combating the disease.

About 40% of the adult deaths in South Africa are a result of HIV/AIDS (Dorrington, Bradshaw and Budlender, 2002). It is estimated that 6.5 million people were infected with HIV by the end of 2003. Of these, 3.2 million were women of childbearing age (15-49) (ibid). As it currently stands, women form the largest percentage of people living with HIV/AIDS and these percentages are increasing. It was observed that the HIV prevalence among pregnant women was around 27.9% in 2003 in comparison to 26.5% in 2002 (Department of Health, 2003).

In South Africa, as in most countries throughout the world, high incidences of HIV/AIDS prevalence are found among the youth. It is estimated that 961 000 of the youth between the ages of 15 and 24 were living with HIV/AIDS in 2004 (Dorrington, Bradshaw, Johnson and Budlender, 2004). Within the nine provinces in South Africa in 2002, Kwazulu-Natal (KZ) had the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of 19.7% among the youth aged 15-24. This pattern is consistent with previous studies that also found KZN to have the highest rates of HIV/AIDS infection (Varga, 1997, Whiteside and Slunter, 2000). While the prevalence rates in the Western Cape (3.3%) remain low, it is purported to show the fastest escalation of infections. The HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in the nine provinces also show a variance between males and females. In the nine provinces, young women aged 15-24 form the largest percentage of people infected with HIV/AIDS (see appendix 1).

1.3 STUDYING YOUTH: A RATIONALE

Youth have been identified as an at risk group in most countries and as such have been the primary targets of many prevention programs and the education sector through its policies and programs. These programs have been geared towards educating youth about HIV/AIDS so that they can take preventative measures to avoid infection. Earlier research on HIV/AIDS and youth focused on knowledge, attitudes and perceptions on HIV/AIDS (Van Wijk 1994; Levine and Ross 2002; Makhate, 2002). The aim was to develop policies and

programs that would enable youth to obtain sufficient knowledge. These studies revealed that most of the youth had average knowledge on HIV/AIDS even though there were still misconceptions on the different ways it could be contracted. For example, in the study by Sally (1990) in Mitchells Plain among young people in the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO), the respondents mentioned that one could be infected with HIV through uncleanness, sharing of eating utensils and toilets. Studies have also revealed that despite their engagement in sexual activities, the youth do not regard themselves as a risk group. For them AIDS was a disease for 'other' people, such as promiscuous men and women, prostitutes, drug addicts, and the poor (Levine and Ross 2002; Makhate 2002; Swart-Kruger and Richter, 1997).

Other research on youth and HIV/AIDS examined the relationship between knowledge and attitudes on HIV/AIDS and sexual behaviours and decision-making. A study by Kelly, Ntlabati, Oyosi, van der Riet and Parker (2002) showed that there is early sexual experimentation among the youth and this puts them at the risk of HIV/AIDS infection. Research on youth has also focused on decision-making and sexual risk taking (Varga 1997; Lugoe and Klepp 1996; Skinner, 2001). The findings revealed that young people are engaging in risky sexual behaviours and that generally there is inequality in sexual decision-making where it seems boys are in control, while girls engage in sex to please their boyfriends.

Emerging studies on youth have begun examining the link between knowledge and behaviour, with a focus on why there are still high HIV infection rates among the youth despite their perceived knowledge. For example, Leclerc-Madlala (2002) examined youth and HIV/AIDS and the importance of the sexual culture and context in St Wendolin's (Durban). She found that young women understood sex as a resource that can be drawn upon for material or economic advantage, for example, in securing jobs, getting gifts such as clothes or basic needs such as school fees, food and rent (ibid: 10). Few studies it would seem, have examined youth sexual identity construction and ways in which this may influence the youth's sexual decision-making and negotiation of safe sex and their response to HIV/AIDS. One such study conducted by Reddy (2003), looked at troubling sexualities and sexual identity construction in the context of HIV/AIDS among youth in one secondary school in Kwazulu Natal. She found that the participants were making sense of their sexual selves under socially given conditions that include gendered structures of power and social

relations. For example, 'soft' emotions are associated with girls and 'aggressive' emotions with boys (Reddy 2003:175).

My study sought to contribute to this emerging body of knowledge by examining factors shaping sexual identity construction among youth and how within such constructions youth make sense of themselves as sexual beings. It also sought to examine how youth consider their agency in sexual decision-making and negotiation processes.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Much has been done by way of educating children about HIV/AIDS. Schools are tasked with the responsibility of providing information on HIV/AIDS and conveying messages of safe sex. In South Africa, this has been done by introducing HIV/AIDS and life skills education into the school program, both through the life orientation program or through integrating it within other subjects. The information disseminated in schools is expected to create HIV/AIDS awareness among learners so that they can make informed decisions and protect themselves from HIV infection. The government has also initiated awareness campaigns through the media. These include programs such as Love Life and Soul City, and campaigns such as the ABC¹. The assumption made is that the knowledge the youth obtain on HIV/AIDS will lead to informed sexual decision making and behaviour change.

The body of research (noted above) that focused on the knowledge and attitudes of youth on HIV/AIDS (Sally 1990; Skinner 2001; Van Wijk 1994; Levine and Ross 2002; Makhate, 2002) revealed that the youth have sufficient knowledge of HIV/AIDS, its transmission and ways of prevention. However, these studies seem to neglect the significance of context and its importance in the construction and interpretation of messages. Little attention seems to have been given to the complex, multiple discourses that influence sexual construction and decision-making regarding sexual behaviour. A cursory examination of the rates of infection and teenage pregnancy reported in clinics around the country suggests that the knowledge youth have on HIV/AIDS and safe sex practices has not necessarily led to behaviour change.² This suggests that youth are

¹ ABC- Abstain, Be faithful and Condomise

² A survey by the Department of Health found that by the age of nineteen 35% of all the teenagers had been pregnant or had a child (DOH 1998). It was found that 20% of the youth aged 15-49 who attended

engaging in unsafe sexual practices that may put them at the risk of HIV/AIDS. It seems therefore that there are limitations to knowledge-based research, as it does not seem to highlight the way culture operates in the everyday world of young people, especially between the questions of their knowledge of self, of the world around them and their relationship to context and their resultant social practices.

The question may then be why young people are still engaging in behaviours that put them at the risk of HIV/AIDS even when they know the consequences? It is this puzzle that focused my research and led me to examine influences on and ways in which constructions of sexual identity among some youth occurred. I also examined the ways in which youth view themselves sexually.

1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY

The study was aimed at gaining an understanding of how grade nine learners construct their sexual identities in the context of HIV/AIDS. The focus was on what and how social practices inform and shape youth's construction of sexual identities and how youth conceive of their sexuality. The ways in which they position themselves within dominant social and cultural discourses were also examined. The assumption is that ways in which adolescents view themselves and construct their sexuality has an influence on their sexual practices and subsequent behaviour.

1.5.1 Overriding Research Question

What factors shape grade nine learners' construction of sexual identities in the context of HIV/AIDS in four secondary schools in the Western Cape?

1.5.1.1 Sub-Questions

- What social and cultural practices shape constructions of sexual identity among youth?
- How do learners make decisions and negotiate within relationships?

antenatal clinics were HIV positive in 1996. This number has been increasing and Dorrington et al 2002 suggests, in 2002, 29.0% were infected.

- How do learners view themselves sexually?
- How do social and cultural practices shape learners' concept of 'the sexual self'?
- How does the HIV/AIDS pandemic influence ways in which learners view their sexual behaviour?
- How does HIV/AIDS influence learners' decision making in relationships?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Research on youth and HIV/AIDS in South Africa has been limited in scope. The focus has been primarily on knowledge attitudes and perceptions of HIV/AIDS (Sally 1990; Van Wijk 1994; Levine and Ross, 2002). The assumption seems to have been that if youth were provided with information about the disease, that is, how it is transmitted and how it could be prevented, this would translate to safe sexual practices. The results from such studies have revealed that the youth have adequate knowledge about HIV/AIDS but that this knowledge has not necessarily led to safer sexual practices. It seems therefore that more knowledge on HIV/AIDS has not led to significant changes in sexual behaviour as HIV infections are increasing.

Other studies have also examined youth sexual risk-taking and gender relations (Skinner 2001; Lugoe and Klepp 1996; Varga, 1997). In these studies, women are often viewed as disempowered and being at a disadvantage in sexual decision making and negotiating of safe sex. As Reddy (2003) maintains, it is crucial to empower women but we need to understand the context in which both men and women live. This would then inform ways in which women are empowered and ways they deal with challenges in their context.

This study examines the ways in which grade nine learners construct their sexual identities. It examines the contextual framework within which adolescents view their sexuality and sexual relationships. Ways in which social practices informed and influenced youth's construction of themselves as sexual beings are also taken into consideration. The choices and decisions the youth make with regard to their sexual behaviours are examined.

Towards understanding the issues described above, the study examines sexual identities within the different contexts in which the youth are located. Context in this instance includes geographic location and contexts of home and school, as well as the discursive

space of relationships and body presentations. It is hoped that the findings from this study will contribute to an understanding of how sexual identities are constructed in different social settings. This may assist in understanding why HIV/AIDS information alone has been limited in changing risky sexual behaviour among the youth. The findings will therefore contribute to policy and program development that addresses issues on youth and HIV/AIDS education. The results of the study may also contribute to the development of curricula as it may form the basis for understanding how youth perceive themselves with regards to their sexuality in the context of HIV/AIDS.

1.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter laid the foundation of this study, it outlined the aim of this study, which is, examining the factors that shape grade nine learner's construction of sexual identities in the context of HIV/AIDS. The sub-questions have also been stated to highlight the aspects of sexual identity construction that will be covered in the study. Motivation is given with respect to why the study has focused on youth and HIV/AIDS. International, regional and South African HIV/AIDS statistics are discussed to draw attention to the increasing percentage of people infected and dying from HIV/AIDS and thus the need for intervention.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I examine existing literature related to youth and sexual identity construction. While I understand that constructions of sexuality are an integral and inseparable part of identity and by implication, adolescence identity, for the purpose of this study they are discussed and examined separately. Thus, the chapter is divided into three parts. As a backdrop to the main section of this chapter that focuses on youth and sexuality, I examine identity and the different ways in which adolescence has been theorized so as to gain an understanding of how adolescent identity has been perceived. This discussion includes conceptions of adolescence as initially characterized by physical or biological changes, psychological or cognitive development and moral development. I follow this discussion with a brief overview of the current debates regarding constructions of adolescence which seek to make complex the constructions of adolescence and which seek to move away from the dichotomies characterizing earlier conceptions. Within such constructions I trace how, within the different perspectives of adolescent identity development, constructions of sexual development is understood.

In the second part I give a brief discussion on why, in the main, youth are regarded as an 'at risk' group. This discussion highlights why research about youth is important in the context of HIV/AIDS.

Lastly, to locate my study within existing research, studies on youth and HIV/AIDS are examined. Ways in which this study will contribute to the emerging body of research on youth and HIV/AIDS are discussed.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENTS: SOME PERSPECTIVES

What follows below is the conceptual framework for the study. It begins with a general overview on social constructions of identity, which sets the framework for understanding youth. This is followed with a discussion on early perspectives on youth identity construction. In this section, I describe how these early perspectives have often relied on physical development as a key identification structure in understanding youth development.

I highlight the limitation of such perspectives by introducing recent debates that consider a more holistic view of youth development. Recent perspectives take into account the social, physical, emotional and contextual influences on youth identity construction. Understanding identity, I argue, is important as a precursor to understanding sexual identity construction.

2.2.1 Understanding Identity Construction

Understanding adolescents means understanding their development from a number of perspectives. Adolescent years are characterized by the search for identity. It is a period when, people begin to ask questions related to 'Who Am I' (Erikson, 1968) and attempt making sense of their place within society. It is a time when collective/social identities, personal identities and sexual identities are all brought into question (ibid).

Understanding adolescent identity means examining constructions of identity and this in turn means examining how society works (see the argument of Hall and du Gay, 1996). It means paying particular attention to the relations between social agents themselves and the nexus between social agents and institutions that shape and are shaped by the social actors (ibid). [Societies shape how we make sense of our personal and collective identities and the ways we experience our lives. Understanding adolescent development therefore needs to take into account how identity is constructed and the context in which it is constructed.] ^{Intro}

Identities are points of temporary attachment to the subject position, which discursive practices construct for us (Hall and du Gay, 1996:6). That is, we cannot talk of personal identity without referring to the societies within which we construct these identities. Skinner (in Breakwell, 1992) suggests that, social identity is personal identity and personal identity is social identity, meaning that they coexist.

Identities are complex as they are not 'an already accomplished fact' that one associates with oneself but "... are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by and position ourselves within the narratives of the past" (Hall, 1990:23) [Hall suggests that identity construction is influenced by the socio-cultural practices within the contexts we find ourselves. He further argues that identities are invented through attempts to represent them. In this construction, history is of vital importance since, Hall argues, we can only

· make sense of who we are by looking into the past. In addition, Hall (1990) maintains that identity is a production, which is never complete, always in process and constituted within, not outside representation. Identities therefore keep on changing and depend on the social settings in which we are positioned and position ourselves (ibid). [Hall (1990) adds that we act and say things from a position in context, and that we speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture, which is specific.]

[Hall (1990) differentiates between collective and personal identity] (the latter is discussed later). He maintains that cultural identities are formed when we see and recognize the different parts and histories of ourselves, to construct those points of identification. Those positionalities we call in retrospectively to our cultural identities (ibid). Hall (1990) views cultural identity firstly in terms of one shared culture or a sort of collective, 'one true self'. Here, he maintains that societies may share common historical experiences and shared cultural codes. He also views [cultural identity as, 'a matter of becoming as well as being, where identity belongs to the future as much as to the past' (ibid: 225)]. [Cultural identity is viewed here as something that already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. He argues, therefore, that cultural identities are not static, but, they undergo constant transformation. This implies that within societies there are certain social practices that members uphold or identify with thus implying a social identity.

[Hogg and Abrams (1988) argue that social identity is qualitatively different from individual identity, and that the group is somehow contained in the mind of the individual group member. In this sense, individual behaviour is influenced as much as it influences the group behaviour (ibid). [Social identity is a result of the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significant to the individual or the group members (Tajfel in Hogg and Abrams, 1988:7). "Being or belonging to a social group is therefore phenomenologically real and has important self-evaluative consequences"] (ibid: 7).

Bourdieu (1976) adds that social identity is a sense of the position one occupies in the social space. Bourdieu acknowledges that societies like other institutions have dominant discourses and that there are power relations from and into which people are positioned and position themselves. This implies that in societies, those groups that possess the power and weight have a social position that makes it possible for them to create a dominant culture

(Bourdieu, 1976). This Bourdieu refers to as the hegemonic culture. Societies shape the individual and at the same time depend entirely upon the actions and dispositions of individuals for its existence. This means that actors do not simply follow rules but bend them, work around them so as to maximize their own best advantage and in the long run some of these rules change (Crossley, 2001). Bourdieu (1976) also adds that identity construction depends on the societies and institutions in which we find ourselves as, what exists as reality for the individual is to a high degree determined by what is socially acceptable. Bourdieu further points out that reality is not absolute, but differs with the group to which one belongs. For Bourdieu, schools for example, provide those who have been subjected directly or indirectly to its influence with general dispositions that generate particular patterns that can be applied in different areas of thought and action. This Bourdieu terms 'cultural habitus' (Bourdieu, 1990).

Bourdieu (1990) suggests that habitus refers to the principles of classification according to which social actors operate in the social world. He characterizes habitus as a system of general generative schemes that are both durable and transposable; they function on an unconscious plane, and take place within a structured space of possibilities (Postone, LiPuma and Calhoun, 1993). Postone, LiPuma and Calhoun (1993) add that habitus is therefore the dynamic intersection of structure and action and society and individuals. This implies that contexts shape identity construction while at the same time being shaped by the actions of social actors.

Tajfel in Reddy (2003) adds that social identity is part of the self-concept derived from group and category membership. Identity construction involves the interplay between our personal and collective selves (ibid). The social class and family, in which one is socialized, therefore contribute to identity construction. Self is therefore understood as being created through the interaction of the agent and context (Tajfel in Reddy, 2003).

Regarding the self project Giddens (1991) suggests that 'self' as 'me' can only be understood when the 'I' is understood in relation to the discourse of the 'other'. 'Self' is perceived as both the object and subject due to the self-reflective nature of human beings, as there is a 'me' for the 'I' to reflect upon, and it is assumed that the 'I' is a cognitive structure in the form of self-concept (Hogg and Abrams 1988:24). In this case, Hogg and Abrams maintain that the 'I' is responsible for constructing 'me'. Identity construction is

therefore a discovery and affirmation of the innate essence which determines what 'I am' whilst it is also argued that it is created from available social roles (ibid). What I am is therefore dependent on the social feedback from others (Hogg and Abrams, 1988).

Modernity has led to the complexification of identities through its compression of time and space through available information systems (Giddens, 1991). In making sense of who they are people relate to the world around them because 'who am I' depends on the social feedback, giving the perception and evaluation of the individual (Giddens, 1991).

Constructing identities has become a challenge in a fast changing world (Giddens, 1991). Giddens adds that tradition seems to be losing its hold as modern institutions differ from all preceding forms of social order, in respect to their dynamism and the degree to which they undercut traditional habits and customs and their global impact. As a result, tradition loses its hold and daily life is constituted in terms of the interplay of the local and global, implying that local contexts in which people construct their identities are influenced by global changes. People therefore follow certain life styles, which according to Giddens (1991), are an integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form of a particular narrative self-identity. This, Giddens (1991) argues, involves choices such as the choice of clothes and modes of acting. These routines, he maintains, are reflexively open to change in the light of the mobile nature of self-identity. What the individual becomes is therefore dependent on the choices they make on a daily basis (ibid).

Any discussion on identities therefore has to include commentary of the interplay between local and global influences on the one hand, and on the other, to context as including social actors, structures and social and cultural practices to which actors contribute and in and through which people give meaning to their collective and personal identities (see the argument of Bourdieu (1990) on habitus).

The above discussion implies that in examining identity construction, we need to pay attention to the South African context as the particular site within which youth in this study construct their identities. South Africa underwent an apartheid era that was characterised by, racial discrimination, inequality in the distribution of resources and oppression (Ramphela, 2002). There was racial segregation; with the whites living in towns, while

Indians, Coloureds and Blacks lived in townships. Social relations that existed during this period were characterised by race, class and gender inequalities (Unterhalter, Epstein, Morrell and Moletsane, 2004). They add that race, class, and gender were features of social status that ascribed and assumed identities. Identities, they argue, were expressed through ethnicity.

It is over ten years since South Africa obtained its democracy but the scars of apartheid still exist. The struggle is not against apartheid only, but for poverty alleviation and access to resources for those people who were disadvantaged by apartheid (Ramphela, 2002). They also have to fight HIV/AIDS, which seems to follow the inequality trends.

The political shifts in South Africa have also led to a significant change in the education structure of the country. The education reforms sought to end segregation and discrimination in schools linked to race, class and gender inequalities of the apartheid era (Unterhalter et al 2004). Soudien (1996) adds that the distinct universes in which young people were schooled and socialised were dismantled. In the late 1990's a percentage of blacks was admitted in white schools. The majority of these multiracial schools according to Dolby (2001:29) retained the values and practices of earlier years while allowing a small, contained select number of black students to join their communities. Soudien (1996) therefore argues that schooling is a central institution in the making and reproducing of social difference and inequality. Today there is acceptance of more black learners in white schools. Schools are therefore seen as primary spaces in which identity is constructed. The implication for this study lies in understanding that youth today are not constructing their identities in isolation, but within a changing global and local context that is in 'constant conversation and conflict with others' (Dolby, 2001:8).

South Africa presents an interesting example of a local context where global and local, present and past histories intertwine to construct particularised youth identities. The history of South Africa acts as a dynamic terrain from and through which identities continue to be read. Influenced by globalisation, South Africa today is substantially different from what parents and older siblings of youth today may have experienced. As such, Dolby (2001) asserts that the youth today are a generation whose past, present and future are neither completely defined by apartheid nor completely free of it.

As societies are still largely divided and defined by race, learners' identities and relationships are productive of a new terrain of race and racial politics. Today, according to Dolby (2001), race is not simply a matter of discarding or embracing already formed racial positions but of renegotiating it in a new context. Categories of identification such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation are therefore not pre-given, but constitute an array of available cultural meanings and identities into which one places or on to which one sutures oneself, at the same time internalising those meanings in an attempt to stabilise both oneself and the surrounding world (ibid). She adds that these categories shift and move contingent both on time and space. To understand the youth today we have to look into the influences of both the local and global contexts.

Youth sexual identity construction is therefore to be examined across cultural and geographical boundaries as there is need to recognise and affirm the vital cultural porosity that exists between and among all human groups in the modern world (see the argument of Dolby, 2001).

Adolescent sexual identities are embedded in the contexts in which they are constructed. However, the latter has often not been considered within broader frameworks of identity as articulated above. Unlike the above theorists who have considered identity construction as embedded in time, space and place, theories on adolescence have until very recently considered either the physical, cognitive or moral aspects of adolescent development with little consideration of the interrelatedness of these aspects and their embeddedness within a particular space and time, aspects which are of particular importance in understanding identity construction of young people in the South African context. As will become clearer in the next discussion, these theories often shaped meanings associated with the concept and more often than not influenced programmes for adolescents. More recent debates included in this section however, provide a more nuanced understanding of the term and provide a useful framework for understanding youth.

2.2.2 Theories on Adolescence

2.2.2.1 Early Constructions of Adolescence

Adolescence has been viewed as a stage in human development characterised by physical changes such as sexual maturation (see argument by Coleman and Roker, 1998, Chilman in Allen-Meares and Shapiro, 1989). It has also been discussed in terms of cognitive development, where at every stage in one's life there is an expectation that a person is able to think and reason age appropriately (see Piaget in Muuss, 1988 and Erikson, 1968). Lastly adolescence has been theorised in terms of moral development whereby people move through stages of moral thinking and as they do, moral development becomes sophisticated and sociocentric (see the argument of Kohlberg in Muuss, 1988).

The limitations of the above-mentioned theories in human development are that they universalize children's development. They do not take into account individual differences and the contexts in which identity is constituted. They ignore the complexity and multiple factors that inform and shape human development in the context in which this development occurs. Thus, the agent and the social context in which the agent makes meaning of his or her environment is not taken into consideration in these theoretical frameworks of human development.

Over the past twenty years the above theories have been criticised because they have been perceived as having a limited view of child development in general and adolescent development in particular. Piaget, Erikson and Kohlberg (in Muuss, 1988) maintain that human development occurs in stages and levels, and that adolescents are bound in time and space. More recent theories, however, go beyond these stages and examine adolescent development more holistically. What this entails is an understanding of adolescence that transcends the rigid boundaries of classifying people's thinking and decision-making into age cohorts, to examining the social and cultural practices in each society that influence the development of children and childhood. The argument in recent work on child development asserts that meaning attached to the physical changes is based on the individual experiences, direct socialisation and the cultural milieu (Graber, Brooks-Gunn and Peterson, 1996). By implication, adolescence has to be understood through examining the contexts in which meaning is inscribed on adolescent experiences and through a

consideration of not only the physical, moral or cognitive changes but a reflection on their desires and societal expectations (ibid).

2.2.2.2 Recent Perspectives on Adolescence

Society plays a role in shaping who we are, how we behave and gives meaning to our experiences. Thus, changes occurring during adolescence are defined by an individual's social context and by the roles and expectations for behaviour, based on an individual's identification or membership in a social group (Jessor, 1998). Identification here means the degree of recognition of sameness or connectedness to social identity. The social groups one identifies with may, for example, be the social classes, peer groups, parental and school influence and exposure to media (Allen-Meares and Shapiro, 1989).

Crockett and Crouter (1995) also maintain that the pathways taken by adolescents depend on the environment in which they are developing. This may include families, peer, and the local neighbourhood. These institutions, they argue, shape the actual opportunities available for adolescents as well as risks to which they are exposed. For example, in South Africa during the apartheid regime, children were forced to perform adult roles such as joining the army, being used as spies by the groups at war and also assuming parent's roles as heads of households. These contexts brought about risks instead of exposing the children to other opportunities in life such as education. The upshot is that child development in South Africa may have not adhered to the stages and levels of human development argued by Piaget and Kohlberg.

The social groups such as the family and peers, and schools are also embedded in the broad social, cultural and historical contexts that shape, in part, the resources and opportunities available to adolescents (Crockett and Crouter, 1995). Institutions such as the home and school affect what is available to adolescents and as such influence what meanings, resources and opportunities are available to them (ibid). Cultural values embedded in societies will shape the family value systems and the school culture. For example, schools that one is exposed to affect one's development through the activities they encourage and the norms they promote (Prosser, 1999). This in turn may influence ways in which youth make sense of themselves as sexual beings as they get meaning about their life experiences from these institutions (ibid).

Calabrese (in Epstein, 1998:4) views adolescence as a growth period that is conducive to alienation, due to the 'betwixt and between' nature of this position in the life course. He further argues that adolescents feel alienated because they are no longer children and they are not yet perceived as adults. They are torn between having their childhood freedom and being responsible adults. They are prohibited from speaking as moral and political agents and they therefore become 'an empty category inhabited by the desires, fantasies and interest of the adult world' (Giroux in Epstein, 1998).

At another level, adolescence is also perceived as a period of preparation for adulthood during which time young people reach physical maturity, develop a more sophisticated understanding of roles and relationships and acquire and refine skills needed for success in performing adult work and family roles (Crockett and Crouter, 1995).

Graber, Brooks-Gunn and Galen (in Jessor, 1998) add that adolescents have to master sexual feelings and develop a sense of themselves as sexual beings. They maintain that this is a multifaceted set of tasks. It includes learning to manage feelings of sexual arousal, experiencing interpersonal relationships with others that may include both physical and emotional intimacy and developing skills to control the consequences of sexual behaviour (ibid).

Adolescence is also viewed as a critical period in the upsurge of sexual drives, the development of sexual values and the initiation of sexual behaviours (Jessor, 1998). This includes physical, cognitive and emotional aspects, all of which play a role in the decision making process of adolescents, and which have not been accounted for in an integrated way by Piaget and Kohlberg as discussed earlier. It is at this time when peers and the adult generation communicate mixed messages about sex (Moore and Rosenthal, 1993). Adolescent development, it would seem, has to be understood in a much more holistic way. This involves understanding the interrelationship between physical, cognitive and emotional development as well as understanding that these operate within a particular context. Understanding adolescent development as embedded in contexts is important in examining why youth may engage in behaviours that put them at the risk of HIV/AIDS.

Sexual identities are part of the personal identity as they offer a sense of personal unity and social location (Weeks in Parker and Gagnon, 1995). Like other identities, they are socially constructed and are influenced by the dominant discourses within societies (ibid). Societies therefore shape how people make sense of themselves as sexual beings. Within many contexts, the dominant discourse of heterosexuality inscribes particular sexual identities that often go unquestioned and commonly produce gender-specific roles that correspond with one's sex (Richardson, 1996). Understanding the nexus between constructions of the sexual self and the context in which issues related to sex, sexuality, gender and HIV/AIDS are produced is therefore important.

Butler (1990) asserts that gender is a cultural construct and is not a direct result of male and female bodies. For her, individuals are not born with any particular gender, but gender is the 'styles of the flesh', which Foucault refers to as 'a stylistic existence' (Butler, 1990:139). These styles, she suggests, are never fully self-styled, as styles have a history and histories condition and limit possibilities.

According to Butler (1990), gender requires a performance that is repeated and thus it is 'performative'. She maintains that gender is performative because it has no ontological status apart from the various acts that constitute reality. The various acts of gender are therefore what creates the identity of gender, and without the acts, there would be no gender. Butler (1990) adds that gender cannot be construed as a locus or agency from which various acts follow since people do not assume femininity or masculinity before acting or behaving in certain ways. To her, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, and is instituted in an exterior space through stylized repetition of acts. As she maintains, "our acts of gender create our identities" (Butler 1990:140).

The gendered constructions are often dichotomized, as they are informed by dominant heterosexual discourses where people are viewed as either feminine or masculine. In most societies, heterosexuality is regarded as the norm. Jackson (1999) maintains that the law and social conventions have institutionalized heterosexuality. From birth, people are differentiated according to their genitalia, and there are different roles that the society associates with each sex. Since heterosexuality is gendered, it rests upon assumed normality of specific forms of social and sexual relations between men and women (ibid). Jackson also argues that our sexual identities are not fixed, but that in our everyday social practices,

we each negotiate and make sense of our sexual lives. Thus, our sexuality is constantly in the process of being constructed and reconstructed, enacted and re-enacted within specific social contexts. This means gender is something that is continuously achieved in our ongoing everyday interaction with others, meaning we *do* rather than *have* gender (ibid). We do gender in our mode of dress, through occupation of and movement in space and in how we manipulate objects. The likelihood that people will form heterosexual relationships and have partners of the opposite sex therefore rests on the social construction of these dichotomous and hierarchical gender categories and practices. In agreement, Butler (1990:17) adds, “[T]he heterosexualization of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical opposition between ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’”. Men are positioned and position themselves as sexual subjects while women position and are positioned as sexual objects.

Within such binary conceptions, there can only be two genders whose existence rests on the notion of ‘otherness’. Desire is thereby premised on gender difference and the meaning placed on the sexual otherness of the desired object. The desire to be sexually attractive appears to be profoundly important to women’s sense of self-worth and closely bound up with the gendered disciplinary practices through which docile, feminine bodies are produced (Bartky in Richardson, 1996). Women often still discipline themselves to fit a model of sexuality which prioritizes male desires and defines women’s fulfillment in terms of love and the giving of pleasure (Holland in Richardson, 1996).

Heterosexuality, as has been discussed above seems to shape peoples understanding of sexual identities. As a result, feminists such as Butler have argued that we are gendered from birth and that we construct our identities through the various gendered performances. Ways in which people make sense of their sexual selves is likely to influence their sexual practices. This means ways in which people understand their physical changes and the meaning given to these changes in their context may influence their sexual practices.

Various theories have therefore been used to understand the link between stages of human development and associated behaviours in order to determine why people behave in certain ways. For example, Bandura (1997) focused on self-efficacy, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) on the Theory of Reasoned Action. The theory of reasoned action has been used in trying to

find why youth engage in behaviours that put them at the risk of HIV infection. This theory is briefly discussed below.

2.3 RISK, CHOICE AND THE THEORY OF REASONED ACTION

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) examines the relationship between attitudes, behaviour and intention. According to the theory there is expectation that people consider the risk in making choices on how to behave. Behaviour here is seen as determined by intention and intention is understood as a joint product of attitude toward the behaviour, what is termed the subjective norm (Eiser and Pligt, 1988). The theory is based on the assumption that human beings are usually quite rational and make systematic use of the information available to them before deciding what action to take (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) argue that people consider the implication of their actions before making decisions on whether or not to engage in a given behaviour. Thus, a person's intention to perform or not to perform behaviour is seen as the immediate determinant of the action.

With the theory of reasoned action, there is recognition that the relative importance to attitudinal and normative factors in the determination of intention may vary depending on the context. They also vary because of a tight specification within the measures of both attitude and subjective norm, of the precise target and context (when and where) of the behaviour in question. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), give an example of decisions about contraceptive use, where for some people it may be more determined by what others may think of their behaviour than by their calculation of personal payoff (Eiser and Pligt, 1988). Thus, according to the TRA, a person's intention to perform a given behaviour is a function of two basic determinants. One is personal in nature and the other reflects social influence (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). The personal determinant is attitudinal, and involves an individual's judgment of whether performing a certain behaviour is good or bad. It also includes the person's attitude toward performing the behaviour in question. The second determinant entails the person's perception of the social pressures put on them to perform or not to perform certain behaviour and his/her motivation to comply with the referents. This is referred to as the *subjective norm* (ibid). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) also argue that the formation of a given intention depends on the prior formation of a particular attitude and particular belief.

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) add that attitudes are a function of beliefs, as a person who believes that performing a given behaviour that has positive outcomes will hold a favorable attitude toward performing the behaviour. Attitudes and intention are therefore the predictors of behaviour.

As regards youth, the theory of reasoned action purports that the youth perform behaviours that they think are likely to result in positive outcomes. This is based on attitudes and the rationality of individuals. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) have also argued that people's intentions are influenced by both the personal and group interests, where one may perform behaviour because one believes that relevant others think he/she should perform the behaviour. For the youth, group interests may mean peer influence where they often do things to please friends.

While the TRA begins to develop an argument that enables us to understand youth and their behaviour, it has come under criticism from those who suggest that it does not examine the link between intention and willingness and maintains that attitudes and beliefs are individually held (McCamish, Gallois, and Terry, 1993). For McCamish, Gallois, and Terry, attitudes and beliefs are socially constructed and the TRC therefore ignores the essential social nature of human action, which in case of HIV/AIDS is the social context in which sexual conduct is understood and acted upon.

The theory of reasoned action has also been criticized for assuming that individual's process information and reach decisions or intentions to act in rational ways, without the influence or constraints of society. On the contrary, individuals are believed to process and make sense of information in their interaction with other individuals. For youth's sexual behaviour, Gold (in Skinner, 2000) argues that when a person is entering a sexual encounter a different set of processes operate and that these will affect intentions, due to the development of excitement and desire.

As adolescents are in their stage of life characterized by physical maturation and experimentation, their intentions may be easily influenced by the circumstances they find themselves. Their eagerness to please others will also influence their intention, as pleasing others would give them a sense of belonging. Thus, the contexts that the youth are in may influence the risks they take and their eagerness to please may sometimes lead to risk

taking. Below I examine some of the reasons why youth are regarded as an 'at risk' group especially to HIV/AIDS infection.

2.4 CONCEPTIONS OF YOUTH AND RISK

People engage in risky behaviours even in cases where they are aware of the negative consequences. According to Jessor (in Lerner and Ohannessian, 1999) risk behaviour refers to "...any behaviour that can compromise psychological aspects of successful adolescent development", such as substance abuse, unprotected sexual intercourse and engaging in violence. He adds that risky behaviour is influenced by multiple domains such as the social environment risk and the personality risk. For Jessor (1998), social risk factors include poverty and racial or ethnic discrimination, and this may influence risk behaviour, as there will be low perceived life-chances.

An individual may be placed at risk by familial, environmental and socio-cultural contexts in which they grow up, as decisions about whether or not to engage in risky behaviour is made in relation to these social contexts (Jessor, 1998). Risky behaviour is also influenced by the society in which adolescents are brought up. Jessor maintains that societies offer some form of protection against risky behaviour. This means whether a risky behaviour, such as precocious sexual intercourse, puts an adolescent at risk for life compromising outcomes such as early pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases or unemployability, is influenced by the risk factors and protective factors in the social environment (ibid). These factors may include quality schools and high control against devious behaviour. Jessor (1998) adds that the degree of risk will be an outcome of the balance of risk and protection.

In addition to the above Levitt (in Lerner and Ohannessian, 1999) argues that risk taking can be biologically based on personality traits such as sensation seeking, where an individual is willing to take physical and social risks for the sake of experience. Lerner and Ohannessian (1999) argue that substance abuse among adolescents is sometimes related to this sensation. They also add that early adolescence is a period of experimentation with adult behaviours, and that, "...decision making regarding risk-taking behaviour occurs on an intrapsychic level when the child or adolescent attempts to reconcile competing forces

within the self about how to behave, such as a wish to adhere to parental values versus a need to assert autonomy” (ibid: 55).

For adolescents, low self-esteem is another factor related to high-risk behaviour, which includes amongst others substance abuse and early onset of sexual activity and unprotected sex (Friedman in Jessor, 1998). For example, risky behaviours like the use of drugs such as tik-tik³ and alcohol consumption, which may influence a persons thinking, and sometimes result in risky sexual encounters. Friedman adds that sexual activities among adolescent girls have been found to be related to low self-esteem and lower educational goals. Risky sexual behaviour is also associated with the use of alcohol and other drugs as they decrease inhibitions and impair judgment (ibid). Sexual behaviours and risks are also influenced by social practices as in some cultures there are strong standards regulating sexual behaviour, which differ for men and women.

Youth as outlined above, are regarded as group at risk, an aspect that makes them more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection. This can be a result of a complex set of factors which are embedded within social contexts that vary in their conception of the adolescent stage, as contexts shape and give meaning to intentions, behaviour and action.

2.5 SUMMARY

Examining adolescent sexual identity construction needs a complex matrix that pays attention to identity constructions, risky behaviours and social contexts and the meaning given to adolescence. This entails developing an integrative approach that includes psychological and sociological theories since psychological theories focus primarily on the individual giving little credence to the influence of culture and society while sociological theories emphasize a focus on meanings that society attaches to adolescents experiences. The limitations in each theoretical orientation can thus be addressed through the adoption of an integrative approach that draws out the complexities.

³ Tik-Tik is an methamphetamine, a potent version of amphetamine sulphate. It can be in the form of white powder or a crystal. It is called tik-tik because of the clicking sound it makes when smoked. It is also referred to as ‘globes’ because it is smoked in the glass sphere of light globes after the metal threads are removed (Leggett, 2003).

Sexual identities are to be understood in the contexts where they are constructed because within social contexts are dominant discourses that inform, shape and give meaning to the changes that characterise adolescence. Identities are therefore not fixed but are negotiated and renegotiated in different social settings (see Jackson, 1999). This means social actors can exercise their agency within the existing structures in their contexts in constructing their identities. Butler (1990) therefore argues that gender creates our identities as from birth we are gendered. She maintains that people perform roles associated with their gender and thus sexual identities are influenced by heterosexuality.

Adolescents are also viewed as a group at risk in relation to HIV/AIDS. They are perceived as at risk because they are at an age characterized by exploration and because they have not yet selected their life partners and are likely to change partners (Skinner, 2000). The context in which adolescent grow can also offer protection or maximize risks. For example, in poverty stricken societies adolescents are likely to engage in risky behaviours for money or other material rewards. To understand adolescent sexual identity construction it was therefore important to examine the context.

2.6 RELATED STUDIES

There have been various studies on adolescence in the context of HIV/AIDS, at both international level and within South Africa. In this section, the studies on youth and HIV/AIDS have been grouped into four categories. The first category concerns studies that explored the youth's level of knowledge, awareness, and beliefs on HIV/AIDS. The second category examined youth decision making and sexual risk taking. The third looks into society, youth, gender and HIV/AIDS. Lastly, studies on youth and sexual identity are examined. These are presented for the purpose of locating this study within current literature. These studies are also important in that they highlight gaps in research, thus providing a rationale for the stance adopted in this study.

2.6.1 Research on Youth's Knowledge, Beliefs and Attitudes toward HIV/AIDS

Various studies focused on youth and their knowledge levels on issues relating to HIV/AIDS (Sally 1990; Van Wijk 1994; Levine and Ross 2002; and Makhate, 2002). The studies were carried out among youth aged between ages 15 and 30. In these studies the commonly used data collection tool was the questionnaire, with a few using focus group discussion and individual interviews. The studies revealed that most respondents have some knowledge of HIV/AIDS even though there were misconceptions about its origin and modes of transmission. Information relating to HIV/AIDS it seems was mostly sourced from the media. There is also an 'othering' of the disease, where most respondents feel they are not at the risk of HIV infection, either due to their religious beliefs, social status and/or educational levels.

These studies are limited in that they only highlight what many respondents know or do not about HIV/AIDS and the respondent's attitudes and perceptions about HIV/AIDS. However, they do not demonstrate whether this knowledge leads to behaviour change, even though they recommend that people are to be more informed about HIV/AIDS to clear misconceptions.

2.6.2 Research on Youth Decision-Making and Sexual Risk Taking

Apart from HIV/AIDS knowledge and attitudes, research on youth has focused on sexual decision-making and negotiation (Varga 1997; Tillotson and Maharaj 2001; Lugoe and Klepp 1996; Skinner, 1991). These studies were carried in various parts of South Africa and the aim was explore choices made by people regarding when, how and with whom to have sex and the extent to which HIV/AIDS influences this decision-making.

Generally, studies reveal that decision-making in sexual encounters is largely dependent on the social situations in which the youth make sexual choices and understand their roles within relationships. These situations seem to be governed by what is perceived as expected or required to maintain a relationship. In all this studies boys controlled the sexual encounters while girls gave into having sex because they feared abuse and wanted to please their boyfriends. The relationships were therefore often framed within normalized

heterosexual constructions of male objectivity and female passivity. In a study by Varga (1997), for example, boys felt true relationships necessitated sex and that it was a male's birthright to have multiple partners. Skinner (2001) also found that there was lack of condom use among his participants and this was because condoms were argued to reduce a person's sexual and social status in the community.

2.6.3 Research on Society, Youth, Gender and HIV/AIDS

In different studies on youth and HIV/AIDS, society has directly and indirectly influenced the knowledge, attitudes, perceptions and decisions that youth make. For example, the myths about AIDS, stigmatisation, and attitudes toward HIV/AIDS and people with HIV/AIDS are mostly influenced by the community in which one lives. It seems previous studies mentioned earlier in this section did not focus on societal influences.

Various studies have examined the relationship between society youth and HIV/AIDS (Kaufman, Clark, Manzin and May 2002; Harrison, Xaba, Kunene and Ntuli 2001; Wood, Maforah and Jewkes, 1996). The data was collected from learners aged between 12 and 18 through the use of interviews, and group discussions. These studies revealed that communities influence behaviour. Kaufman et al. (2002) for example, propose that those children living in more affluent areas have the promise of landing potentially lucrative jobs and thus tend to engage less in risky behaviour while Harrison et al. (1996) found that early sexual experimentation was common with girls who had older partners as there were unequal power relations in the relationship. Within community contexts, it seems therefore that gender is a key differentiating feature of experiences and constructions of sexuality since in these studies, respondents' sexual relationships appear to be constructed around a set of social roles governed by assumed heterosexuality. These rules inscribe particular roles males and females and provide the script from which identities are interpreted. In the case of these studies, boys for example, are positioned as those who determine the nature of relationships.

2.6.4 Research on Youth and Sexuality

I found only two studies by Buzwell and Rosenthal (1996) and Reddy (2003) that examined youth and how they construct their sexual self in the midst of HIV/IDS. Buzwell and Rosenthal carried out in Melbourne while Reddy (2003) study was in KZN. The studies were among youth between the age of 10 and 19. To collect data questionnaires, group discussions, individual interviews and observations were use. The study by Buzwell and Rosenthal (1996) revealed that the respondents followed different sexual styles where the sexually active participants are those who are sexually adventurous, sexually competent and sexually driven. Reddy (2003) found out that that respondents' view of their sexual selves was gendered. Her findings, also suggested that sexual identities are fashioned and regulated through the creation of new demands in the HIV/AIDS environment and that the participants were making sense of their sexual selves under the socially given conditions that include structures of power and social relations.

2.7 CONCLUSION

The studies discussed above have not sufficiently taken into account the overriding importance of the social contexts and how life circumstances shape one's risk of HIV/AIDS infection. This means that the studies have helped us understand is the 'how' of young people's high levels of infection, but what is needed is an interrogation into the 'why', by looking at the dynamics within which adolescents construct their sexual identities (Harrison et al, 2001).

The South African context remains under examined. The current attitudes to sexuality are a result of studies that appear to examine social class (as primarily demographically and economically determined) and culture. The contexts and its historicity are not taken into consideration. Thus, this study seeks to contribute to some understanding of how youth construct their sexual identities and make sense of themselves as sexual beings in different contexts. The social contexts that shape people's understanding of sexuality and sexual practices and the interpersonal interactions in which sexual practice is constructed and enacted are therefore taken into consideration.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A research design is a plan of where, how and when the research was carried out (Babbie, 2004). This section thus provides a methodological framework that describes how the research was carried out. The study is located in a qualitative paradigm and the various data collection techniques used and reasons for the choice of the methods are given.

3.2 METHODOLOGY

This study was aimed at gaining an understanding of how youth construct their sexual identities within different social contexts. To do so, a qualitative approach was used as it seemed most appropriate for what I sought to investigate. Qualitative research involves understanding human actions and processes in their context. This includes understanding social relations in their contexts.

A qualitative approach was useful in that its aim is to describe and explain a pattern of relationships, which can be done only with a set of conceptually specified categories (Mishler in Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). It incorporates a process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants and conducted in a natural setting (Creswell, 1994:1-2). Babbie, Mouton, Payze, Vorster, Boshoff and Prozesky (2001) suggest that, qualitative research attempts to study human action from the insiders' perspective by describing and understanding human behaviour. They add that it involves human behaviour in a natural setting. Denzin and Lincoln (1998:3) further suggest "qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an imperative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter". Researchers, in this paradigm, are interested in making sense of or interpreting phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them.

Qualitative researchers are usually interested in understanding human behaviour instead of explaining and predicting it (Babbie et al, 2001). Miller and Brewer (2003) add that society has to be seen as composed of people's perceptions of the social world, meaning that knowledge of the social world is incomplete unless we also understand people's social

meanings. Miles and Huberman (1994) agree and add that with qualitative research, emphasis is on peoples' lived experiences and the meanings people place on events and structures of their lives. Understanding the meanings and social relations within such contexts was important in this study for reasons already articulated in the literature review (chapter 2).

This approach is primarily concerned with matters such as "...the accessibility of other (sub) cultures, the relativity of actor's accounts of their social worlds, and the relation between sociological descriptions and actors' conceptions of their actions" (Halfpenny in Neuman, 2000:145).

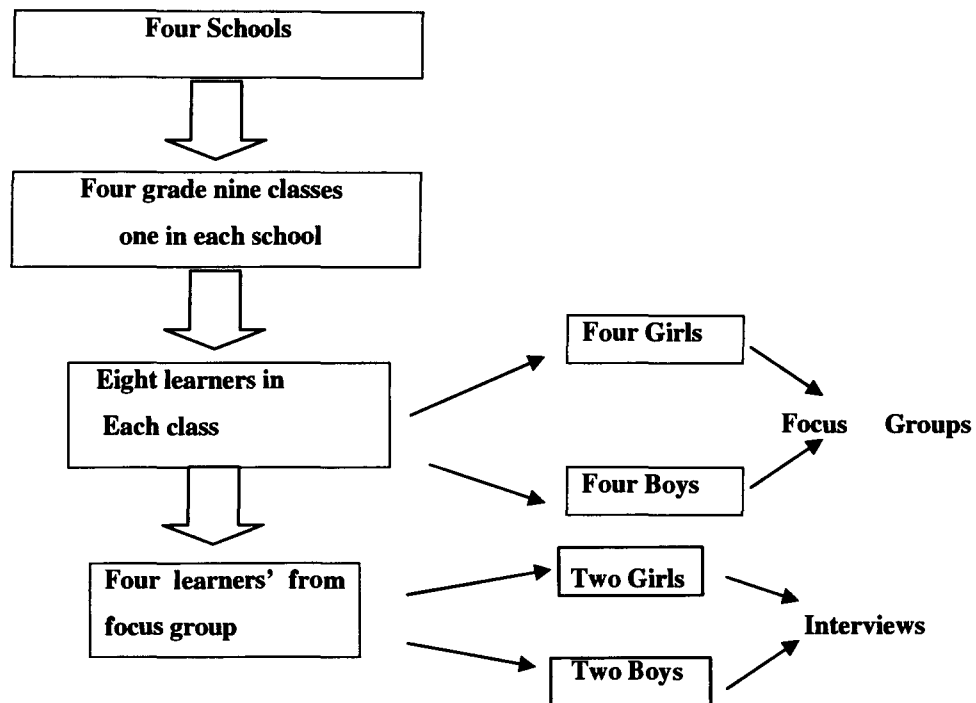
This approach seemed therefore most appropriate for the reasons mentioned above. I was interested in examining how, under what conditions and what factors influence adolescents as they make sense of themselves as sexual beings. Within a qualitative framework, I could pay attention to how adolescents viewed their social world, to the meanings that society gives and the meanings they give to their life experiences.

3.3 SITE AND SAMPLE

The focus of this research was on how the adolescents construct their sexual identities. To understand this I had to understand some of the conditions under which the adolescents were constructing their sexual identities and whether the different contexts influenced this construction. As such the selection of the schools could not be random.

3.3.1 Selecting Schools

The tabular representation depicts the process of site and sample selection. Each aspect is detailed below.



Purposive sampling was used in the selection of the schools. Purposive sampling means the researcher selects a segment of the population using their own judgment (Charles, 1995). This sampling technique was used because the researcher wanted a spread of schools that would be varied in terms of geographic location, population demographics, social, historical and political difference.

Simple random sampling was used to select the schools, as it is a process that gives each element in the population an equal chance of being included in the sample (Mouton, 1996). Four schools selected then became the sites for my research. As this study contributes to and is located within a larger project on 'Schooling, Cultural Values and HIV/AIDS in South Africa', the schools I used in this research were pre-selected for this project. The primary researcher and the research assistant of the larger project undertook the selection process. They grouped all high schools in the Cape Metropole area according to the ex-department categories used prior to the democratic elections in 1994. The schools within

each category were numbered and the numbers placed in each of four boxes. One school from each box was selected using simple random sampling. Thereafter a letter was written to the Western Cape Education Department for permission to conduct research in the four schools. The ethics committee of the University of Cape Town also approved the research. The administration at each of the four schools was contacted and an initial introductory visit was planned where information was given about the larger project in general and my area of interest in particular.

As an important component part of my fieldwork, appointments were made for observation in the schools. I spent a week observing at each school prior to the data collection phase. In each school, I was assigned to work with one teacher, who acted as a mediator between myself and the other staff members. These teachers assisted in locating classrooms that I could use for my interviews and negotiating time with other teachers, as data was collected during normal school hours. The teachers familiarized me with the school and were of assistance in the selection of the grade nine classes I would be working with in each school.

3.3.2 Grade and Class Selection

In each school I chose to work with grade nine learners because they were at an age in which they were experiencing both physical and emotional changes. The assumption was that they are also at an age where they are thinking about, exploring or engaging in some form of sexual activity. This was an important factor since my study focused on sexual identity construction.

During my first day of introduction and observation in schools, I found that each school had more than one grade nine class. I thought that in each school I would get a few learners to volunteer from each class to participate in the study. This was however, not possible. The management in the schools argued that this would disrupt the smooth running of the classes. I then negotiated to work with learners after school and this was not possible, as some learners stayed far from the schools. In one school, the argument was that learners went home in groups to avoid being mugged by members of the gang groups in areas around the school. In each school, I was therefore assigned to one grade-nine class. No specific criterion was used in the choice of these classes, though in two schools that had Afrikaans and English classes, I was assigned to an English class. I therefore carried out my

study in one grade-nine class in each school. A letter of consent was given to all learners in each grade-nine class I worked with in the four schools for parents or guardians to assent on learners' participation in the research (Appendix 2).

3.3.3 Selection of Learners

All the schools were co-educational, with varying ratios between boys and girls. The number of learners in each of the selected classes ranged between 20 and 40. Selection of the learner sample therefore occurred in phases from the use of the entire classes for the completion of a questionnaire to the selection of individuals for focus and individual interviews.

Questionnaire Sample

As a baseline for the study, it seemed important to ascertain the knowledge levels of this cohort of students since earlier research had indicated that, by and large, youth have sufficient knowledge about HIV/AIDS. A background questionnaire was also administered to understand the respondents' familial background since context was an important factor in this study. As such I administered questionnaires to each designated class in the study. A total of 124 learners participated in this stage of the research.

Focus Group Sample

From each class eight learners were selected, with an equal number of boys and girls each time. To select these students in each school purposive sampling was used. The choice of the total number of 32 learners who participated in the group discussion was based on the responses given in the questionnaires that were administered. Their familial background, religious affiliation and age were taken into consideration so as to ensure a diverse group of respondents.

Individual Interview Sample

The selection of learners to be interviewed was also purposive since I used my discretion after I had interacted with them in the group discussion. Various aspects were taken into consideration in making the selection. For example, I chose learners who seemed shy, those who dominated the focus group sessions and those who seemed most knowledgeable about issues relating to HIV/AIDS as these would make a diverse group. Each time though, I

selected an equal number of boys and girls since I wanted my sample to reflect, as far as possible, the views of both.

3.4 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Understanding sexual identity involves discussion on issues relating to sexual behaviours, which are often considered as secret, sometimes taboo and often very personal. The sensitivity of the topic is usually due to the way in which most societies “areas of social life concerned with sexual or financial matters remain shielded from the eyes of nonintimates” (Claire, and Lee, 1993: 6).

Apart from the sensitivity of the study, I was also dealing with children between the ages of 14 and 18. As a result, I could not ask explicit questions or be insensitive to community and school viewpoints on sex and sexuality. With this in mind and to elicit in-depth information, which would make the research process interesting for learners, I had to not only vary the methods of data collection, but also consider the conditions under which the research was conducted. This meant paying attention to where the interviews were conducted as well as the nature of the questions I posed. To ensure that I complied with the conditions of the study, I therefore used *participant observation*, *questionnaires*, *focus group discussions*, and *individual interviews*. This use of multiple methods of data collection, termed triangulation, is also referred to as multiple operationalism (Denzin, 1989). Through triangulation the researcher attempts to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question, through the various methods used. These methods compliment each other and increase the reliability of the data collected. The shortcomings of the different data collection techniques may also be balanced out, through the combination of methods as this overcomes the personal biases and deficiencies that flow from one investigator or method (Denzin, 1989). Babbie et al (2001) adds that triangulation is considered one of the best ways to enhance validity and reliability in qualitative research. Triangulating the data collection techniques therefore, was useful in probing the various issues the study sought to examine since each method provided a different perspective on the issue.

3.4.1 Participant Observation

Schools are sites where sexual and other identities are developed, practiced and actively produced (Epstein and Johnson, 1998). In order to understand my respondents and gain an insight into the social and cultural context that shapes their sexual identity construction, I needed to develop some understanding of the school as the context in which these identities were being produced and reproduced. To gain insight into the schools participant observation was used.

Participant observation according to Babbie et al (2001:292) is “where the researcher is simultaneously a member of the group she or he is studying and a researcher doing the study”. This assists in viewing the respondents from their own perspective. Neuman (1997) adds that observations involve paying attention to, watching and listening and therefore absorbing all sources of information.

A week was spent in each school, during which time I observed the everyday running of the school. My observations took different forms. It involved, for example, observing how the school started in the morning (assembly, beginning of classes, how learners were expected to behave as they walked into classes, practices regarding late coming, etc). I also observed the dress code of both learners and teachers, and the ways in which learners interacted amongst themselves and with their teachers in and out of the classroom.

I also observed what happened on the playgrounds especially during interval and when learners were exchanging classes. In the playgrounds, I took into consideration the games they played and ways in which the learners interacted amongst themselves.

I also sat in the staff rooms and around the administrative block to listen and observe some of the practices in the school. During such periods, I often got to hear about some of the behavioural problems teachers were experiencing with learners and the various ways they disciplined learners.

Teacher observations were also important as teachers play a role in shaping sexual identity construction through the messages they convey and the ways they act. This occurred in staff rooms as well as during classroom observations.

Classroom observations were also carried out. I observed the general aspects of the classroom setting and the interaction between teachers and learners and among learners themselves. I took note of the classroom settings where I took into consideration the arrangement of desks, and learners sitting arrangements. Observation was also on how within classes' sexuality manifests, such as, in the expected roles for boys and girls. Most of the classroom observation periods were spent observing Life Orientation lessons. This was done in order to gain an understanding of the context in which learners gained knowledge on HIV/AIDS and sexuality in the classroom, and the messages that were relayed.

Observation was also an ongoing process throughout the data collection period as I was also interested in expression and movements (eye movements, facial expressions, and bodily movements) during focus group discussions and individual interviews. This assisted in capturing those issues that learners preferred acting out rather than saying.

During the observations that have been discussed above, field notes were taken, as “good notes are the bricks and mortar of field research” (Fetterman in Neuman, 1997:363). This was in the form of jotted notes, which were expanded soon after I left the field each time.

3.4.2 Questionnaires

Two sets of questionnaires were used to collect data (Appendix 3 and Appendix 4). These were used to obtain a brief background of the learners as well as ascertain their knowledge of HIV/AIDS. These two sets of questionnaires were self-administered. In self-administered questionnaires, the respondents are asked to complete the questionnaires themselves. This method was appropriate in the study as I was dealing with grade nine learners who could read and write. Babbie et al (2001) maintain that, the self-administered questionnaires are appropriate when the population under study is adequately literate.

The first questionnaire obtained information on the background of the participants. This questionnaire included demographics, the social backgrounds and socio-economic factors. For example, questions were asked about parents' level of education and employment status, where the learners lived, with whom and their religious affiliation. This background

information was considered as important since it provided me with a sense of the social conditions from which the respondents were drawn.

The second questionnaire was an HIV/AIDS knowledge questionnaire. This questionnaire was used to find out, if indeed the learners had adequate knowledge on HIV/AIDS. The items for this questionnaire were extracted from a questionnaire I had used in my previous study on knowledge, attitude and perceptions of HIV/AIDS among grade twelve learners (Makhate, 2002). The questionnaire consisted of 11 close-ended questions, whereby questions were asked and the respondents were given fixed responses from which to choose, as this is quick and can be analyzed easily (Neuman, 1997).

The questionnaires were administered to learners by the researcher during a negotiated period between the researcher and the teachers concerned. The presence of the researcher was important because, as Babbie (2004) argues, the researcher can serve as a guard against confusing questionnaire items and offer clarification and therefore obtain relevant responses. He adds that this would also decrease the number of 'don't know' and 'no answer' questions. Teachers assisted in interpreting questions when learners' first language was not English.

3.4.3 Focus Group Discussions

Focus groups are "group discussions exploring a set of specific issues" (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999:4). Participants were asked questions, and were given time to exchange anecdotes and comment on each other's experiences and points of view. Focus groups were used in this study because they are ideal for exploring people's experiences, opinions, wishes and concerns. They also allowed participants to generate their own questions, frames and concepts and to pursue their own priorities on their own terms and in their own vocabulary. I functioned as facilitator in these discussions as I stimulated and directed the conversation. I also guided and made sure that all members of the group were participating in the discussion. These group discussions provided direct evidence about similarities and differences in participants' opinion and experiences, as there was a large amount of interaction on issues relating to sexuality.

The focus group discussions were in two stages at each school. In the first stage, the boys and girls formed two separate groups. This was to give both groups the opportunity to discuss issues they may be shy or embarrassed to bring up in the presence of the other group. The focus group during the first stage was preceded by a video, which was used as a vehicle to introduce the topic and elicit discussion. The video was entitled 'Who Cares' and it examined relationships and AIDS. After watching the video, the learners were asked questions on what they had just watched. They gave their interpretations and judgment on the different scenes and ways they would act or deal with some of the challenges the actors faced. This discussion was guided by a series of questions I had prepared (Appendix 5).

In the second stage and in each school, boys and girls came together and formed one group. Imaginary scenarios were narrated to them by the researcher upon which they commented (Appendix 6). Follow up questions were derived from their responses and used to guide the discussion. Here I guided the discussion, prompting to seek clarification and to direct the discussion. I also made sure that all respondents participated.

In addition, learners gave written responses to the imaginary scenarios in the group discussion. The purpose of the scenarios was to get a personal response on issues relating to sexuality because due to the sensitive nature of the study some respondents may have been shy to share their feelings and experiences in the group.

3.4.4 Individual Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four learners (two boys and two girls) in each of the four schools (Appendix 7). Semi-structured interviews were used in the research, as they assisted in gathering broader and more in-depth information and enabling the researcher to pose the same questions to each learner but in a flexible manner. They also allowed individual respondents to say what they thought with greater richness and spontaneity (Miller and Brewer, 2003). This format involved the researcher (interviewer) deciding in advance, what broad topics would be covered and what main questions would be posed. Semi-structured schedules allow for adaptability of the research instrument as the interview unfolds. Its use also provides for the individuality of the research respondent. The format was discursive and allowed the respondent to develop their answers in their own terms, at their own length and depth (ibid: 126).

The researcher interacted with the respondents at a personal level. These interviews are also referred to as face-face interview. The face-face interaction gave the researcher the opportunity of observing bodily expressions and movements. It also provided the researcher with an opportunity to probe and seek clarification during the interview. The interviews covered the life of the learners in general, their sexual experiences and expectations and issues relating to HIV/AIDS.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

The aim of data analysis, as argued by Babbie et al (2001), is the discovery of patterns among data that point to theoretical understanding of social life. In the study, data from the background and HIV/AIDS knowledge questionnaire was analyzed in the first stage of data collection phase, since the learners' responses were used in the selection of participants for the ensuing phases.

The responses from the two questionnaires were not statistically analyzed. They were only analyzed and used descriptively. The responses were organised by identifying the similarities and differences. The data was then interpreted and written in summary form.

During observations, field notes were taken in point form and then expanded soon after I left the field each time. This field notes were typed, and written in summary form in order to paint a picture of the contexts in which the learners were constructing their sexual identities. A description of the four schools, where they are located and their every day practices was developed as a result.

Data from focus group discussion was video recorded and then transferred to audiotapes. These tapes were transcribed. The videotapes were than watched to make sure that the transcriptions covered all that was discussed in the focus groups as well as to capture the body language. The transcripts were then read to make meaning and to trace patterns of discussion that emerged. The most striking findings were highlighted. Similarities and differences in the responses given were also taken into consideration. The data was then organised into themes and categories.

The individual interviews were recorded on audiotapes. These audiotapes were transcribed and typed. The transcripts were also read. Initially, I highlighted the general trends and then later sought the differences. The data was then organised into themes and categories. This involved, “a process whereby certain segments of the text are attached to certain meaningful key labels or codes...this involves reading and re-reading texts, trying to make sense of the patterns and themes that emerge from the data” (Babbie et al, 2001:493). Neuman (2000) adds that emerging categories are identified and the raw data is organised into conceptual categories and themes or concepts are created.

3.6 ETHICS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The research was conducted in an ethically transparent manner, where consent from the Department of Education, schools and parents was obtained. This was deemed important since the learners were below the age of 18, and I was dealing with a sensitive topic that some parents or the above mentioned institutions might have not regarded as appropriate for the learners. The learners were also briefed about the research and after selecting the respondents, they were also informed that participation was voluntary and they were free to leave.

The research was carried out in accordance with the code of ethics laid down by the University of Cape Town. In this, attention is paid to confidentiality of the respondents and securing informed consent of all participants. As I was dealing with children, consent from parents or guardians was obtained and all respondents were well informed about the study. The UCT code of ethics also puts emphasis on ensuring that one's study does not pose physical, psychological or social harm to participants, and in this study, there were no foreseeable risks for participants.

Participants' identity was reserved and names and places changed to protect identities. No information obtained during the research was discussed with anyone besides the researcher and supervisor. Each school was assured that the results of the research would be made available to participants on request.

As the research is on a sensitive topic, the researcher had to self-disclose to enhance communication, as “...a major principle of interpersonal communication is that a

relationship is enhanced by providing enough ...private information about oneself to another” (Morgan, 1997:170). The researcher was also aware of the possibility of disclosure of participants on personal issues and in such cases negotiated with participants to seek help and where necessary assumed an adult role and gave advice.

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in only four schools in the Western Cape, with only 30 or 40 participants in each school. There will therefore be no generalizations as these respondents were not representative of all grade nine learners in the schools and in the province. These learners were also purposefully selected, which therefore makes generalization difficult.

In some schools, there was a language barrier, as I could not communicate in either Afrikaans or Xhosa. The research was mostly conducted in English and therefore the responses I got from learners who English was their second language may differ in interpretations if they were said in their own language. In some interviews an interpreter was therefore used. In this case, I gained second hand information as I relied on the interpreter. This was problematic in that in some instances the interpreter did not give the exact words of the respondent, but a summary of what was said. Probing in order to elicit more information was also difficult even though we tried as much as possible to let the respondents tell their story. The presence of two adults during such interviews may have also been intimidating for the respondents even though they were assured of confidentiality and the role of the second person was explained to them.

The schools and classroom time schedules were also limiting factors, as data was collected during normal school hours, since learners could not stay after school. This was sometimes problematic in that too much had to be done within a short time. For example in one instance, I had two focus group discussions within one period. Before we could rap up the discussion with the last group the bell rang. The learners lost concentration, as they had to move to the next lesson. I therefore had to negotiate and renegotiate time slots to collect data, which was not always easy. There were often interruptions by the school intercom especially when announcements were made. Therefore, we often had to pause and continue after the announcement.

I was also dealing with a sensitive issue which made it sometimes difficult for participants to discuss certain issues which they regarded as too personal or to be explicit. This may therefore have limited what was said. In addition, my role as an 'adult' researcher asking children questions was a limitation in that learners sometimes did not find it easy to express themselves without feeling self-conscious or embarrassed. For example, in some instances during interviews respondents informed me that they were involved in a sexual relationship by saying, 'we did it', 'we moved on to the second stage after kissing' or 'we did what big people do in the movies'.

There were also limitations in the selection of learners who participated in the research as the teachers and the administration used their own discretion in the choice of the grade nine classes I had to work with. I therefore cannot rule out the bias and limitations associated with such a selection process.

My presence as a researcher might have also influenced the nature of data collected, as researchers are often seen as outsiders and intimidating. The age difference between the researcher and respondents may also have affected the communication process where the respondents felt uncomfortable to disclose information. Being a female researcher may also have influenced the type of data I got. Boys may not have been too open to discuss their sexuality's and may have withheld some information or exaggerated it. Girls may also have been too eager to please and may have therefore exaggerated their responses.

3.8 ACCOUNTING FOR MYSELF AS A RESEARCHER

Throughout the research, I tried to understand how my desires in trying to understand how my participants were constructing their sexual identities might affect both the group and individual interviews. I therefore had a research diary in which after every interview I wrote the main points that came up in the interview and my interpretation, and how the interview had influenced me both as a researcher and personally.

The power relations of the interviews were not hierarchical in one direction, because I did not want the respondents to feel like they were dealing with an adult who was not in touch with what is happening in their world, I would often speak the same language, using similar phrases such as 'I dig that chick' instead of saying one loves or likes a particular girl.

I was aware too that my own sexual identity construction was shaped by my own social location, a space that more often than not privileged heterosexuality. I might have therefore influenced the data I collected because I identified myself as heterosexual by the disclosure of my marital status and the fact that I had a new born baby. This might have led to those students whose sexual identities do not conform to the norm of heterosexuality to feel they could not say much about their sexual selves. Denzin (1989) also maintains that gender filters knowledge in that the sex of the interviewer and of the respondent shape the discussion and the information gained. Thus, interviews take place within cultural boundaries of paternalistic social systems in which masculine identities are differentiated from feminine ones. This means my sexual identity may have influenced the responses I obtained from both girls and boys.

As a woman, I felt it was easier talking to the girls about their sexualities than boys. While I tried to open conversation with boys as much as possible, it took quite some time for them to relax and talk about sexual issues. The language used by the respondents was sometimes not appropriate, especially in an interview where one of my respondents kept on referring to girls as 'whores' and 'bitches', and using phrases such as 'you fuck them'. I therefore had to understand the position from which the respondents were talking and not be judgmental or show disdain.

3.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have discussed the methodological framework of the study. The schools as contexts were chosen because according to Soudien (1996:333) school are a discursive terrain in which young people find themselves and within which they have to work to understand themselves. Thus identities are constructed and reconstructed in schools. The choice of the schools was also influenced by the historical background of the country as residential areas were racially segregated. So to find whether ones context does influence identity construction there was need for a representation of learners from different social backgrounds.

Grade nine learners were used because according to the education system in South Africa learners aged fourteen or above are expected in this grade. At this age I therefore had an

assumption that learners are aware of their sexual being, and some may have already experienced their pubertal changes.

Varying methods of data collection were used to enable the researcher to elicit information and make the research process interesting for learners. There was also need to vary the methods as I was dealing with a topic that learners maybe shy to discuss with me as both an adult and a stranger.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This study sought to examine sexual identity construction among Grade 9 youth in some schools in the Western Cape. In particular, the study examined *how* and *within what* social practices they were making sense of their sexual selves. The study paid particular attention to context as a discursive space in which youth come to understand and construct their sexual identities. Data was collected from four secondary schools that have been referred to as Radford, Heritage, Zingisani and De Hoop in this study.

As already stated in the previous chapter, data was collected through the use of two questionnaires, focus and individual interviews as well as participatory observation methods. Since the main aim of the study was to examine sexual identity construction, the data obtained from Questionnaire A is not included in the main findings. It was used merely to gain insight into the knowledge levels of participating youth as a way of confirming what other studies have suggested regarding the HIV/AIDS-knowledge base of youth. As the results (Appendix 8) indicate, this cohort of youth has what might be perceived as sufficient knowledge about how HIV/AIDS is contracted and how it might be prevented. They also hold positive attitudes towards those infected with HIV/AIDS.

In order to gain some understanding regarding the background of learners and schools as discursive spaces in which sexual identities are produced and reproduced, I used the results from Questionnaire B as well as the field notes of the observations to develop descriptive profiles of learners' socio-economic background that included the educational levels of parents, the siblings in the family and who the primary guardians were. Since this was not the main focus of the study, these profiles are attached in Appendix 9.

Schools were also briefly described as a way of developing some understanding of the context of these learners. These brief descriptions, in 4.2.1, are included below as the introduction to the main presentation of results.

The main findings presented in 4.2.2, thereafter emanate from field notes, focus group discussions and individual interviews and describe how and under what conditions learners are constructing their sexual identities.

The data suggests that this cohort of learners make sense of their sexual selves and come to understand their sexualities through a variety of practices. These include understanding roles in initiating, negotiating, and managing relationships; through body representations and the meanings attached to these; popular discourses of the media as well as through the risks and choices they take in negotiating relationships. Family practices as well as regulatory practices within schools also serve as sites of productions and by implication as discursive spaces for the constructions of sexual identity. As such, what follows the description of schools below is a description of the data in six broad themes. Each theme includes categories that highlight similarities and differences between and within particular school groups. These groups are not fixed but sometimes include differences along lines of racial, gender and location.

4.2 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.2.1 Brief Descriptions of Schools and Research Subjects

The learners in this study came from four schools that fell under the four different education departments as demarcated prior to the 1990's (see page 46). As already stated in the previous chapter, schools and respondents have been renamed for purposes of confidentiality. The process of selection (of schools and learners) was detailed in Chapter 3. What follows below is a brief description of the schools and the selected learners.

Radford Secondary

Radford is a predominantly white school located in the northern suburbs of Cape Town, about 40km from the city. Most of the learners come from middle class families. Their parents have qualifications above grade twelve and are either formally employed or self employed. Learners seem to be well informed about the job market and its demand. This was revealed in their future aspirations which involved studying further in Science and Information Technology.

In the school I worked closely with four boys, Allen, Mike, Bradley and Anthony and four girls Laura, Carol, Randy and Tracy. All the learners were white and came from families where both parents were working. The learners were living with both parents, with an

exception of Carol whose parents were divorced and was therefore living with her mother. The learners had relationships and most of their parents knew and discussed these relationships with their children.

Heritage Secondary

Heritage is located in the southern suburbs about 30km from the city centre. The population here comprises both middle class and the working class. The school is a predominantly coloured school, with varying numbers of Muslims and Christians.

The eight learners I worked with were aged between 14 and 15 years. The boys were Hilton, Wade, Faruk and Shane, while girls were, Charne, Zeena, Charmaine and Rene. Amongst the eight learners Faruk was the only Muslim. The learners came from families with both parents and in most families the fathers were formally employed while the women were either housewives or working in the factories.

De Hoop Secondary

De Hoop used to be a big school but now the enrolment is low. Due to this, some of the classes are rented out to organizations that manage and conducted technical courses. The school is located in a predominantly coloured Afrikaans working class community, with large numbers of unemployed people. The school is located in an area characterized by high rates of crime and various gang groups. There have been incidents of gang members shooting learners in the school premises and there is therefore tight security.

Most of the learners in school come from single parented families or are living with their grand parents. The eight boys and girls I worked with were Rudy, Frank, Ivan and Salim, while the girls were Sharon, Shirley, Rita and Julie. Amongst the eight learners I worked with five had 'a passion gap' which is a form of identity in this area. Rudy was one of the boys who lived with his grand mother because her mother had left her and got married. Amongst the learners I worked with none of their parents had studied above grade-12. The parents were either unemployed or working in factories or as drivers and most women were housewives.

Zingisani Secondary

Zingisani is located in the black township. It is a small school and all the learners and the majority of teachers are Xhosa speaking. There are a few coloured teachers. The school is

located in an area characterized by high unemployment and poverty. Most parents are either unemployed or work in the informal sector. Most learners live with extended families in shacks with one or two rooms (see appendix 9).

I worked with four girls and four boys in the school aged between 14 and 19 years. The boys were Thembekile, Andile, Dilikhaya and Thanduxolo and the girls Nokoazi, Thobeka, Nosizo, and Xoliswa. The learners came from families where their parents had not gone beyond grade-12.

While the geographical location of the four schools is different, Zingisani and De Hoop are both characterised by unemployment and poverty. De Hoop and Heritage are both coloured schools, but they differ in the rate of employment and living standards, while Radford is located in an affluent area. Despite the differences in the four schools all the learners have access to the media in the form of television and newspapers.

4.2.2 Main Findings

Presented in six broad themes, what follows below are the main findings of the study. Each theme comprises organising categories as follows:

4.2.2.1 Initiating, Negotiating and Managing Relationships

- *Initiating Relationships: Who pursues and who is pursued?*
- *Social Networks and Initiating Practices*
- *Choice of Partners and Sexual Identity*
- *Control, Restrictions and Sexual Identity*

4.2.2.2 Body (Re)Presentation in the Construction of Sexual Identity

- *Sexy, Sensual and the Male Gaze*
- *Masculinity and Maturity*

4.2.2.3 Family and Social Practices and talks about Sex and Sexuality

- *Family and the Sexual Talk*
- *Family, Silence and Sex*
- *Religion and sexualities*

4.2.2.4 School Practices and Sexuality

- *Dress Code*
- *Curriculum Content*

4.2.2.5 Popular Media Representations

- *Media and sexualities*

4.2.2.6 Risk, Choice, HIV/AIDS and Youth Sexuality

- *Time, Space and Sexuality*
- *Sex, Intimacy and Relationships*
- *Condom use*

4.2.2.1 Initiating, Negotiating, and Managing Relationships

In the following discussion I examine how within relationships, learners construct their sexual identities. This they do, it seems, through understanding respective gendered roles in initiating, negotiating, and managing relationships. As indicated above, I use four categories to present the findings in this section.

Initiating Relationships: Who pursues and who is pursued?

The results reveal two features about how in initiating relationships sexual identities are understood. The first relates to an awareness of the expected roles and how this awareness leads to the second aspect, the ‘performance’ of an expected role. Within the latter, evidence emerges of how practices are sometimes subverted, particularly by the females.

Regarding the first aspect, the responses in the study revealed that in initiating relationships, the dominant trend was that boys are ‘pursuers’ while girls are ‘pursued’. All thirty-two learners, irrespective of gender and racial group, proposed that it was the male's role to initiate relationships or to go out and seek a partner. Dilikhaya, an older and mature boy amongst those I interviewed in Zingisani stated, “The boy *has* [his emphasis] to approach the girl, not the girl”. In agreement with Dilikhaya, Thunduxolo, from the same school confidently proposed that he makes the initial advance and suggests that when he likes a girl, he “simply approach[es] her and tell[s] her that [he] personally loves her”. Andile, also from the same school cited an example of how he had approached a girl he liked. He stated, “She was passing by and I said, “wow” and they [friends] said, “Go, go, go get her. I asked her name and her address, and she asked mine, and I told her that I love her and she said yes”. Allen, a white boy from Radford also held similar views as the above. He stated, “It's the guy that approaches the girl usually. I don't know if its dominance or whatever but the guy usually has like a, he's got to do it in a sense”. Hilton a

tall and shy boy from Heritage added, "You just have to do it [approach a girl]". Two boys from De Hoop, a Coloured school in the township, proposed consistent views. They too suggested that it is the boy's prerogative to approach a girl as they are the ones who choose the girls they like. Frank stated, "I chose a girl who wrote me a letter, I decided on her because she looked the best of the lot". Ivan, a reserved boy from the same school added, "You must choose the right person for you". What seems evident in these descriptions is that boys accept the role of initiating or making the first advance in pursuing a relationship.

Interestingly, all girls, irrespective of their race or geographic location were aware that initiating and negotiating relationships fell within the 'expected' role of boys. Laura a very out spoken and out going white girl from Radford captures a common view when she states, "I don't really go straight up to a guy and tell him I like him or something like that. (Laughs) I still prefer them to come to me". The expectation by girls to wait to be pursued was also confirmed by Charmaine, a coloured girl from Heritage who feels she has to exercise self control to achieve her goals. She stated that she cannot go straight to a boy and ask him out and as a result she confirmed that she sometimes "waits very long" for them to ask her out. Nosizo a black girl from Zingisani added, "My first boyfriend, he come to me and said I want you to be my girlfriend and after some time I say yes".

While it was a common trend amongst this cohort of learners that boys have to initiate relationships there were boys and girls who felt girls could also initiate relationships. Thembekile, a very flashy and English proficient boy from Zingisani argued that girls used to approach him, he stated, "They [girls] come to me and, let me be your friend, sometimes I say no, maybe they are ugly...I used to have a lot of girls because I didn't have to go to the girls, they used to come". Andile from the same school also felt there was nothing wrong if girls also initiated relationships. He stated that "I will be okay if a girl asks me out, if she is beautiful". Allen from Radford concurred with the two boys from Zingisani when he stated, "...the relationship I'm in now, she approached me, which was different because I haven't done that before". While there may be an acceptance of a different role for girls, what seems evident in the above is that boys still control the process since it is they who decide whether or not to pursue a relationship once approached by a girl.

The girls from Radford seemed comfortable with the view that boys pursue and they [girls] are pursued. Interestingly the coloured and black girls voiced differing opinions during

individual interviews. Charne a very confident girl who feels she is in control of her life from Heritage, stated that she would approach a boy. She said, "If I like a boy and he doesn't come to me, then I go to him". Charmaine from the same school concurred and added that, "If he's a sexy guy, you go and talk to him". Rene, from the same school also seemed to agree. She stated, "You go along and speak to him". Sharon, a Coloured girl from De Hoop agreed and suggested she would go "...talk to him and see what happens". Xoliswa, a black girl from Zingisani Secondary School who had recently broken up with his boyfriend after finding out that he had another girlfriend stated that, she would "spit it out before someone takes him".

Interestingly though, the same girls who felt they could initiate relationships had never actually done so. When asked why? The black girls from Zingisani stated they feared disappointment and being labelled as loose. Xoliswa stated, "I will be scared to be disappointed by the guy, because boys gossip, he is going to tell his friends and they will point fingers and laugh". Nosizo from the same school added, "Girls are scared to talk to boys because they will say, umtwana ke sfebe (that girl is a whore)". Charmaine, a coloured girl from Heritage concurred with this view. Her reluctance to initiate a relationship emanated from fear of rejection. This, she suggested, would create feelings associated with a low sense of self. She states that if you approach a boy and he rejects you, "then you think there's something wrong with you because the boy doesn't like you. Then its, what's wrong with me? Do I look stupid?"

While there seemed a common understanding of the boys and girls roles in initiating relationships, five boys from different geographical locations acknowledged that initiating relationships was not always easy and that boys too, feared what girls seem to fear: rejection. Hilton, from Heritage admitted to being nervous sometimes, but since he knew it was his role he did it. He stated, "You feel nervous, after a while you get used to it because you just have to do it". Faruk, one of the small boys from Heritage added that it is a challenge to initiate relationships and that for him; boys have to approach girls knowing that they may be rejected. He stated, "You go, if she doesn't like you, you go to the next one, you move on and forget about her". Two boys from Radford were also of the same view. Anthony stated, "I only liked them [girls], I never had the guts to talk to them". Bradley added, "I was very nervous, will I sound corny?" Thembekile from Zingisani also

gave an example of how, on one occasion he liked a certain girl but was scared to tell the girl he loved her. He stated,

This girl, I know loves me, and I love her as well. One day that girl was standing in the yard, my cousin said Thembekile loves you. [she said] let Thembekile tell me. Thembekile, Thembekile, Thembekile, I did not. She [asks] me, what do you want? So I look at her and smile. I didn't tell her. But I love her. I'm scared to say I love you

Social Networks and Initiating Practices

An awareness of the 'expected' roles for male and female seemed to produce intricate ways in which girls, in particular, produced practices that on the surface could be perceived as passive, but when examined were actually active. Generally all the girls understood that they could not approach a boy directly because that was not 'expected' of them. What emerged therefore was the use of a series of networks that included the use of friends, 'bumping into each other' and what was termed 'the look'. These practices, it would seem, ensured that dominant roles were maintained and that these girls appeared as 'pursued' and passive.

Using Friends

The girls from Heritage and Radford which are schools located in more affluent areas compared to the other two schools argued that friends played a role in the initiating and negotiating of relationships. They suggested that in cases where they liked a boy, they often felt they could not approach him directly. Instead they told a friend who would then tell the boy so that he could pursue the girl. The girl on the other hand would pretend that she was being pursued. Tracy a white girl from Radford agreed and gave an example of how she assisted one of her friends in negotiating a relationship. She stated: "She likes my cousin. I spoke to him already and I think he also likes her". Rene, from Heritage also suggested that she gets "a friend to help and go talk to him and then you get to meet". So I think something is going to happen between the two of them". Zeena from the same school stated that, as a friend, "if she, says she likes this boy then we like all are watching and we will maybe even speak to him for her". Sometimes negotiating a relationship included using a friend as mediator in the introduction, as Charmaine also from Heritage proposes

My friend told me about him and so I like no I want to meet him. My uncle and them had this little karaoke by their house...I went and my friend introduced me to him so we started talking and it was like a connection, bond thing. We met and we like clicked

The girls from Zingisani and De Hoop did not mention using friends in the initiating of relationships. They argued that they waited for the boys to tell them they liked them. However boys from the same schools mentioned that they had been told by a friend that a particular girl liked them. Thembekile stated, "This girl, I know loves me, and I love her as well. She used to tell her friends to tell me and then my friends would tell me". Frank from De Hoop stated, "In Grade 8, my friend came to me and told me that this girl has a crush on me, so I asked her to be my girlfriend".

Interestingly the boys from the four schools did not mention using friends to initiate relationships but they seemed to be aware of the way in which these girl networks operated and responded to them in unquestioning ways. Allen from Radford agreed that the girl network was operative by stating, "You hear from your friends that this chick likes you or you tell your friend that you like her and then she'll find out and then she'll say, no, I like you too, or whatever, then you ask them out". The use of friends, it would seem, was a means by which girls could assert themselves and make choices of who they wanted to date, thereby not accepting it as solely the prerogative of the boy. Interestingly though, it was done in a way that made boys assume control of whatever choice they made.

Body and Eye Contact

Another way in which girls actively participated in initiating and negotiating relationships involved body contact. This form of participation seemed common only in the Coloured schools of De Hoop and Heritage. Sharon, a girl from De Hoop High illustrated this when she stated,

We would bump into each other and he asked me my name and I said Sharon and I asked him his and he said Orian. We didn't know each other very well and after about a few weeks later we sat together... my other boyfriends it's like I just bumped into them like, hello, what's your name? Come to the jukebox and I'll meet you there at seven

'The look' was also used to get attention. A boy and a girl from Heritage maintained this. Hilton suggested, "You see when they like you by their looks...girls can manipulate you with their looks". Charne added, "You know when someone likes you, the way he looks at you and gives you attention".

Forms of communication and initiating relationships

The girls and boys from the more affluent school, Radford, used cellular SMS messages to initiate relationships. Bradley from Radford stated, “sometimes you start first by being friends, you talk and SMS one another than you move to the next level like kissing”. Mike added, “you SMS her”. The girls also agreed to use SMSs to begin conversation with boys.

The boys and girls from De Hoop and Zingisani mentioned the use of letters to begin a conversation and make friends with a boy or girl they liked but felt they could not merely approach. Two boys, one from De Hoop and the other from Zingisani stated that they chose girls who wrote letters to them. Frank stated, “I chose a girl who wrote me a letter and I decided on her because she looked the best of the lot”. This sentiment was also expressed by Masixole when Thembekile asked him: “Masixole, if you have a feeling for a girl, what do you do?” His response was, “no I won't come, but I will like write a letter”.

There was also agreement amongst the four boys in Zingisani that sometimes they see a girl walking past and they approach her. Andile illustrated this as he recounted an incident where he approached a girl. He stated, “She was passing by and I said, “wow” and they (friends) said, “Go, go, go get her. I asked her name and her address, and she asked mine, and I told her that I love her and she said yes”. Thanduxolo added, “If you go to a party together you will have a chance of proposing her”, for them the two people get to know about each other when they are already in the relationship.

Choice of Partners and Sexual Identity

As has already been discussed above, within this cohort of participants the choice of partners seemed to be influenced by the different expected masculine and feminine roles. Through the choice of partners learners seemed to be making sense of their sexual identities. In the main they seemed to idealize what for them is feminine or masculine. This included a particular body image and personality as well as specific codes of dress. How choices were made though was interesting. In general, for boys choice seemed to be based on girls' personality and looks while for girls, values of honesty and trust took precedence. There were, however, individual differences in emphasis on certain characteristics that varied across race, and geographic location.

Two boys from Radford argued that their choice of girls depends on personality and how pretty they are. Anthony from Radford stated, "The looks are friendly, not conceited". Allen from the same school stated that his ideal girl had to be "tanned and pretty" and that, "The real one [girlfriend] you have good communication with them, it's not based on looks, it's more on personality". Mike from the same school suggested that "Personality definitely because it doesn't help that you have this beautiful girl but she's this dull person and doesn't like going out and socializing and stuff like that".

In addition to looks and personality, two boys from Heritage Secondary suggested that they took honesty into consideration in their choice of girls. This was confirmed by Wade when he stated, "Honesty is important because you have to trust them". Faruk added, "I would say honesty".

All the four boys from Zingisani considered looks as important. Interesting they did not only consider facial features but commented on girls' body size as another contributing factor in the choice of girls. Andile suggested that he considers the body and looks in his choice of a girlfriend. He stated, "she has not to be big...not fat, not thin. Just in the middle. She has to be beautiful". Dilikhaya added that he would look for a girl with a "good body, sexy eyes and lips" and Thanduxolo felt the girl had to have a good attitude and that she should be someone who is good looking. He stated, "I look at the attitude, 'a be' grand". Thembekile also looked at facial features and the way the girl dresses as he argued that, "Like if a Xhosa girl is nice in the face, is nicely dressed, like jeans I like that". Only one boy from another school concurred with sentiments about body size. Hilton from Heritage Secondary stated, "We also look at the size, you don't want a fat girl".

For girls though, while there were differences in characteristic features of an ideal partner, there seemed to be a general agreement that ideal partners have to be honest and trustworthy. So while looks and personality were dominant factors in considering choice of partner in the four schools, many girls said that for the most part, this was not the main criteria. Emphasis on different features differed across race and geographic location.

The four girls at Radford emphasised personality and intelligence. Randy illustrated this when she stated, "I like the personality, I don't like shallow people who just care about how they look, but [they] have to look good as well to a certain extent, a small percentage of it"

and Carol added, "Ideal man, he mustn't be bum ugly, he must have a good heart. A guy that has a sense of humour, he must have some interest that I like, we must have something in common" respectively. Laura added that the boys "must be intelligent otherwise you're going to have a boring conversation". Tracy also stated, "I think the most important thing is that a guy should be able to talk to you. You must be able to have a conversation with a guy. He must be able to understand you, cause you can't just kiss and stuff all the time you must have an open relationship". While intelligence and communication were important the girls also considered looks. Tracy stated, "A lot of people say, does a guy want looks or does he want personality? I think you must have both because I know this person, he is so nice looking, he's got this spiky hair but his vanity makes him look ugly". Randy agreed and added, "Sometimes your personality makes you pretty, but looks also count a bit because you don't want to be embarrassed if you go walking around with this guy... Ya you are attracted to a guy that looks good".

Two girls from Zingisani stressed that they liked boys who are trustworthy, who had similar interests with them. Nokoazi stated, "I like boys who talk a lot, who're not shy. He must love the same things that I love. He must have a beautiful hairstyle and his looks and the movement". Xoliswa also felt personality was a contributing factor in the choice of boyfriends, as she stated, "personality, someone who doesn't talk a lot". Thobeka from the same school said the looks and trustworthiness were a contributing factor. She stated, "I want him to be beautiful, tall and not drinking beer and smoking cigarette, not liking many girls and he has to be honest so that I can trust him". Nosizo also felt she wanted someone she could trust. She argued that she would like "Someone I can trust, and would like me for what I am".

The four girls from De Hoop seemed to place self-assurance on looks and care. They maintained that they would like someone who is handsome, loved them and could take care of them. Sharon stated that an ideal man was one who was not only handsome and cute but someone who would make her feel loved and also takes her out. Julie added that an ideal man would be someone who would "care for me, love me and respect me".

While contextually, there are differences amongst this cohort, they commonly place emphasis on looks, personality, values like honesty and trust and intelligence. It would seem that those who are from more affluent environments place emphasis on intelligence,

whereas those from poorer environments emphasize looks and personality. It would seem though that while boys and girls are in general agreement on some common features, unlike the boys, girls considered age and conceptions of boys as important identifying features in making a choice.

Age was a consideration for 14 of the 16 girls in the study. They all argued that they wanted to be in relationships with older boys. There seemed to be a belief that girls mature quicker than boys amongst this cohort of girls. Carol from Radford captured what was a common trend in girl's responses. She stated, "I would say like maybe a year or two older not younger. I don't know, it's just not the done thing". Randy from the same school stated, "I would never go out with a guy younger than me", while Laura suggested that girls' "maturity is like four years higher than our age boys". Rene from Heritage wanted an age differences between five and six, as she stated, "I mean if it's five or six older than me, then I think that's the oldest that it will be". Rita from De Hoop added, "He has to be older".

Interestingly, reasons for the need of an age difference seemed to differ by race and geographical location. The consensus amongst the four girls in Zingisani was that older boys were more experienced in relationships and girls could therefore learn from them. Nosizo stated, "I like older boys they teach you, like my boyfriend last year he said I should kiss him and I don't know and he said just kiss me I will show you". Thobeka added, "my boyfriend, I was fourteen and he was seventeen or eighteen because he is twenty-one now, I talk to him like a child. And when I say good bye to him he says, no, you have not kissed me and I say okay, I kissed him like 'mba' and he didn't like that, he taught me French kiss".

Amongst the girls in De Hoop, older partners were expected to offer security and support. Shirley implied this when she stated that; "If he is young than you have to be like his mother or something, you have to look after him". Thus it seems girls begin to understand themselves as weaker gender than their male partners. Rita added, "He has to take care of me".

Older partners were also given preference by girls at Heritage but reasons differed from those offered above. For them boys their age or younger were less mature and often

childish. Charne, stated, "Boys our age are childish if you say you want to spend time with them, they will say, not now I'm going to watch Superman (Laughter)" and Charmaine from the same school suggested that "It's like he doesn't want everyone to know that Rene is his girlfriend, but now if Rene has this older boyfriend, they like sit together at interval its okay because like everyone knows".

However, interestingly, during the individual interview I found that even though there was a general *preference* for older boys, some girls were currently in relationships with boys their age. Two girls from Zingisani and De Hoop stated this. Nosizo stated, "He is the same age as me, we are both in grade nine". Julie added, "He is also sixteen".

Only one boy (from Radford) seemed to be aware that girls considered boys' maturity slower than theirs and he argued that as a result boys often act mature when around girls. Allen pointed out

When you're around them [girls] you have to keep a good soft image.... you don't make corny jokes where they think you're immature, and they have this whole thing of the three year concept between guys and girls. They think that they are three years more mature than what we are. So you have to act mature around them

In addition to the above, girls at Radford also pointed to considering impressions they held of boys as a characteristic feature in their choice of boys. They did not like what one called "goody-two-shoes boys...these guys who study hard and they're so nice to girls and they're willing to do everything for you, like carry your bag all the time, things like that" (Randy). Carol agreed by suggesting, "We like the bad guys, a guy that will be able to walk up to you and say how's it, you know".

Control, Restrictions and Sexual Identity

Relationships are not neutral places, but rather spaces in which power relations were manifest in gendered ways. More often than not, it would seem, boys had more control over what happened in relationships. Through these power negotiations both boys and girls began to understand their sexual identities. Due to the recognisable power relations, some girls felt that being in a relationship restricted their freedom. However, responses differed across gender and geographic location. One girl from Radford and another from Heritage felt they didn't want to be in a relationship at their age for reasons associated with control. Carol from Radford stated

I don't have a boyfriend now, I prefer to stay free, it's nicer, It's just if you want to do something you can just go ahead and do it. In a way I feel tied down because it's - why didn't you ask me before you did that. Boys can be like that. Very possessive. I don't want to be stuck with this because at this time in my life I like going around saying hi, how's it, what's your name, what are you doing, you know

Her familial background may have also influenced the decision because Carol's parents were divorced and she did not trust that relationships could last. As she stated, "I'm scared that like what happened with my parents, they must have loved each other and I'm scared that happens also. Then the whole big thing about getting divorced and filing the papers and everything. Too much stress! (Laughs)".

Charne, a very confident girl from Heritage expressed the same sentiment when she added that having a boyfriend meant, "You did not have to love other people and the boyfriend has to know where you are every time". For this reason she felt she was, "still too young to think about love and... I'm just going out with that boy to have fun to enjoy my young life. ...I like a lot of guys I can't stick to one... that's why I would rather joll". These two girls felt they did not want to be in relationships because they had to tell their boyfriends of their whereabouts.

Girls such as Tracy from Radford feel the pressure of what is expected from them in a relationship. She summed it up when she stated that, "I think dating has become so complicated. I mean all we were supposed to have is a guy who is more than a friend. You know, someone you hangout with and kiss every now and then, but now its as if you have to be scared because they might want to have sex with you, or what if they have AIDS".

While the girls from Heritage and Radford found relationships restrictive, the girls in De Hoop and Zingisani seemed to take for granted that relationships operate in this manner. For example, Thobeka's relationship seemed to be controlled by her boyfriend because they could only see each other if he requested. She was satisfied with such an arrangement because, as she argued, this spared her from being hurt. She stated, "I wait for him to call me and ask me to come over, I don't want to come to his place and may be find him with another girl I can be frustrated".

Boys on the other hand defined restriction in terms of the number of girls they could date. Unlike the girls, where restriction seemed associated with power and control and thus assumed heterosexual positions of masculinity and femininity, restriction for boys was associated with freedom to date more than one girl. Shane, a Coloured boy from Heritage summed it up in this way. He said “We both agreed now. We would still be friends and whatever because you can't see the same person now the whole of your life and so on”.

What emerges is a picture of youth constructing sexual identities from predominant heterosexual positions. Many taken-for-granted assumptions are upheld within these sexual constructions. Women are expected to be aesthetically appealing and complacent while men are supposedly the caretakers, controllers of relationships and intelligent. What emerges therefore is a portrait of, particularly, girls unquestioningly complying in maintaining the status quo of male privilege.

4.2.2.2 Bodily (RE)Presentations in the Construction of Sexual Identity

Presentations of the body acted as a site of sexual identity reproduction. The body was presented in a number of ways that included dress, movement, grooming and making oneself attractive to others.

Sexy, Sensual and the Male Gaze

There were different ways in which the girls presented or thought they were expected to present their bodies. All 16 girls in the four schools concurred that they were expected to enhance their body in a number of ways to ensure it had a feminine appearance. Body image especially, the size of the body, seemed important.

A common trend across the geographic location and race was that the feminizing of the body was usually in response to the male gaze. What differed however was how the body was feminized. In Zingisani, Heritage and De Hoop the girls feminized the body through the type of clothes they wore whereas at Radford, feminizing involved a slim body and the use of makeup.

Three girls at Zingisani made suggestions regarding their attire and its role in attracting the male gaze. Nokoazi, stated, “I have to be sexy, by maybe wear mini skirts things that

expose the body. My smile, the way I walk, things like that. Do my hair and make an aliceband, wear my clothes, tight clothes you know, mini skirts, like hipsters that are tight and wear brands". Thobeka added that "I love small breasts, long hair, I like to have hips not to be straight. I don't like to be fat or thin I just like to be in the middle... I like tight jeans, I like to be sexy. I want to be like a girl, whom a guy will say, 'I like that girl'". Xoliwa also suggested that, "you have to look smart". Zeena from Heritage also maintained that girls want to look sexy, and being sexy according to her was, "...about the way they look and the clothes they wear, their hair and the way their body is and all that". She also pointed out that now and then she puts on nice clothes so she looks sexy too. Rita from De Hoop added, "you dress well, you want to look your best". Looking good was interpreted as looking attractive for boys.

Carol and Laura from Radford also argued that they want to look good, but to them looking good meant enhancing their looks and having a slim body and Carol stated, "Ya, of course I want to look good, I don't want to get fat and that, I try to look my best, I don't want people to walk past me and go aaah look at her" and Laura added "you have to wear make-up sometimes and some lipstick. It enhances your looks".

Not all girls subscribed to the sentiments articulated above. Sharon, a very pretty, slim girl from De Hoop, stated that she deliberately switches roles by dressing differently on various occasions. She sometimes acts and dresses like a girl and sometimes like a boy. She acknowledges that in reversing 'expected' dress codes, people have changed their perceptions of her. She stated,

When I'm in the house I put on my best clothes and I model in them.
When I go out I put on sloppy clothes. I dress as a boy because
everybody says I'm like a boy. I feel very comfortable cause being a
girl is very unlikely to me...I have to walk this way, stuff like that.
It's better to be like tomboy, running around doing things

Masculinity and Maturity

To be regarded as masculine involved acting in ways that those around one sanctioned as masculine. Boy's masculine performances were often for the attention of girls but, more importantly, these seemed often in relation to other boys. Boys it seemed needed to prove their maleness in the presence of other boys. Experiences of how this played out differed in relation to geographical location and race.

In Radford, the affluent school, masculine performances were in the type of music the boys listened to and certain topics that they felt only boys could discuss. Allen from Radford suggested that, “with the guys we like listening to like heavy music” and Mike from the same school added, “I enjoy having parties with guys alone, it's cool...because you can talk about guy things like all of my friends have bikes and we talk about bikes”.

Boys from Zingisani also acknowledged that there are things they do with boys only and not the girls they respect. This involved frequenting certain places. Dilikhaya, for example, commented, “With guys we sit by the shops or in the street, you can't take your real girl there”, where a real girl according to him is, “the one you love not like those ones you play with”. Hilton from Heritage suggested that boys talk differently when talking to girls and when having a conversation with other boys. He says, “Well, a girl you can talk to her differently, show respect to them and be gentle. You can't like exactly hit them or throw things at them”. Mike from Radford also stated that boys perform differently when around girls than when they are with boys. He stated “You start realising this is a nice chick and you start acting differently, I don't know, you just hang out with chicks, you get to know what they're like..., you do what the chick likes”. Unlike girls, boys seem to ‘put on’ a performance in relation to girls and boys whereas girl performances are more often than not geared towards attracting the male gaze.

4.2.2.3 Family, Social Practices and Talk about Sex and Sexuality

The information and different messages respondents received from various sources within their communities influenced ways in which they understood and experienced physical and emotional changes and by implication, constructions of sexual identity.

Family and the Sexual Talk

In this study, discussions on anticipated physical changes during adolescence differed across gender and race. A dominant trend amongst the sixteen girls was that discussions were mainly on menstruation. It was viewed as a feminine experience kept between mothers and their daughters. With boys there was little or no discussion on any physical changes.

All the girls, irrespective of the geographic location or race, had discussed issues relating to their physical changes with mothers, siblings or friends. On some occasion, respondents reported that information was volunteered to them while in other instances they inquired. Interestingly, the affluent White girls from Radford and the poor Black girls from Zingisani argued that their mothers volunteered information. Laura from Radford stated, “like when I became a teenager, thirteen and that, she got little things that she would read, like a brochure on puberty and stuff and then they say you going to have these changes like your moods and your body”. Nokoazi, from Zingisani stated that her mother said, “If I have blood on my panty I must tell her and she will buy me pads and so on”. Thobeka from the same school added, “My mother told me that I am going to have breasts and that I am going to grow some hairs. I asked her when, and she told me that when I was about 14 or 15”.

In the other two schools, parents provided information upon request from their children, when they had their first menstruation. Sharon from De Hoop stated, “I asked my mother what is periods and she told me and I asked her what you have to use to stop the period and she said you can use a tampon and pads”. Charmaine from Heritage added,

I was in Standard 4 (Grade 6). The one morning I woke up and I went to the toilet and I pulled down my panty and I'm O my God! and then I went to my mommy and said this stuff is on my panty. She said O, okay, you've started your period and all this and she gave me pads

In families where there are older siblings, it seemed common for younger girls to obtain most of their information from the former. Carol from Radford stated, “Ja, my sister, when she started then I said what's happening to you? And then she will explain to me. And that was like Standard 9. So it was early and I went along fine with it I'm not bothered with anything”.

Common experiences therefore included female family members taking responsibility for supplying information to other females. In some families though, discussions on adolescent physical changes were a warning for girls to keep away from boys. In other instances it became the signifier for the introduction of birth control measures. Such constructions were particularly prominent amongst girls at Zingisani. Nokoazi stated, “When I started [menstruating], and when I'm walking with a boy, even if it's a friend she says no, no, I don't want to see you walking with boys, you must go and have contraceptives”. Thobeka added, “She told me that I can go to the clinic because there are people out there who can

rape me and I can become pregnant. So I went to the clinic for protection". Xoliswa also had a similar experience with her mother when her periods began as she mentioned that, "My mother told me, don't do this and that you are now old, stop running around with boys and stuff, you will get pregnant".

Amongst the four girls from Heritage, mothers linked menstruation to pregnancy. Unlike in Zingisani where girls were told to use contraceptives the girls at Heritage reported being told to take care and avoid pregnancy. While these girls were told to take care, they were not told how to protect themselves. Charne provides an example when she states

I got my periods in primary school, and it was like, here I've got my periods and I am like every body else I'm not a child anymore. I am grown to be a woman. My mother told me that, "listen here now you mustn't catch on stuff that you mustn't do so, if you fall pregnant that's your thing

Whereas most girls report having some discussion about pubertal changes with at least one family member, most of the boys (14 of the 16) did not have any such discussions. Thanduxolo from Zingisani states what seemed a common response to questions about information on puberty and parental involvement. He said, "No, we don't talk about that". Most boys report obtaining pubertal information from school, with a few suggesting friends as a source. Only two boys, from Radford suggested that their parents told them about the physical changes. Allen stated, "My parents told me". Shane from Heritage added, "She said I mustn't do stupid things like with girlfriends, you must be careful with what you're doing and right now she told me I'm going to have to shave and all that stuff". Mike from Radford pointed out that he learned about the changes, "mainly from friends and we had somebody come to speak to us at the primary school".

Family, Silence and Sex

While some parents discussed issues on physical growth with their children, there seemed to be silence on issues relating to sex and sexual experimentation. There was generally limited dialogue on the subject between adults and children. The reasons for this silence varied with every respondent, irrespective of race, class and geographical location.

Six of the sixteen girls across racial and demographic lines suggested that they had never discussed issues relating to sex with their parents. Sharon from De Hoop felt her mother did

not want to talk about sex with her because she feared she would do the mistakes she (her mother) did when she was her age. She stated,

No we don't talk about that. Because she was very young when she did it so she's scared that I might do the same mistake as what she did. Like mom how did you feel when you first had your period or when you first had sex? Then she's like don't bother me I don't want to talk about these things cause you're too little to know

Nokoazi from Zingisani had a similar experience. She states, "My mother doesn't talk that much to me, we don't talk about other things [Sex and boys]. She'll say no, no, I don't want to talk about that". Laura from Radford concurred with this as she stated, "I don't talk about sex with my mum". Two girls from the same school also confirmed this. Tracy stated, "I won't talk to my mother about that, she will just say I have heard it from school". Carol added, "Boyfriends and stuff, I usually tell my friends. I talk to my sister a bit, I wouldn't like to tell her [her mother]". Zeena from Heritage also stated, "She [her mother] treats me like a baby she won't be happy with me having a boyfriend. But she will make jokes about other people like my cousins, She will say they're going out with their boyfriends and they mustn't come back pregnant".

Four girls reported having had conversation on sex with their parents. Laura from Radford was the only girl who reported having a discussion about AIDS and sex with her father. She expresses how difficult it was. She states, "He will talk to me about AIDS and sex and stuff. It is uncomfortable when I talk to him about it because I mean he's my father so it's got this stress level there, you don't want to go there". This discussion between Laura and her father may have taken place because her father works in an HIV/AIDS program. Carol from the same school added that her parents were not explicit in talking about sex as they talked about, "the birds and the bee's speech and you know you must only have sex with the person if you know you love them and you're going to get married".

Thobeka from Zingisani also talked with her mother about sex and the use of condoms. She stated that her mother said, "Like you know my child, I know you are going to get a boyfriend and she says I want you to use a condom if you don't want to use a condom, you don't need to have sex. I talked to her and tell her that I use condom". Charne from Heritage pointed out that she is open to talk about everything with her mother. She stated, "I'm open

with her. I do talk to her about it [sex], and she says you can do whatever you want to do but use protection and that, I'm not stopping you because I was sexually active at that age”.

During the focus group discussions with the boys in each of the four schools, 12 of the 16 boys agreed that they had never discussed issue relating to sex with their parents. Hilton from Heritage captured what was a common response among boys when he stated, “We don't talk about that, with our parents”. When asked whether he had sex related issues with his parents, Allen from Radford said, “No, my family's not that open”.

Only four boys suggested that they had talked with their parents about sex. For the most part, discussions included fathers only. Mike from Radford discussed sex with his father. He states, “Yes, with my father, like sometimes, not only privately but my father, he like does the Bible study in the church for teens and so like at Bible study one might ask something and we'll talk about it or whatever”. Like Laura, Mike's discussion may have been possible because his father worked with teenagers. Andile from Zingisani also agreed that they talked about sex and kissing with his father even though they did not go into the details. He stated, “Yah, he told me about kissing and that I can have sex when I am 18 years and above. But he didn't tell me about French kissing, he told me about baby kiss”. Shane from Heritage and Frank from de Hoop were the only boys who indicated having a discussion with both parents. Frank maintained that his mother made him aware of sex and girls. Frank stated that his mother said, “I must be careful with girls”. Shane on the other hand stated

I spoke to my dad, when we are alone, he asked me do you know what is sex? Now you can't have sex with anybody, you must be true to the one you love, you can't have a whole lot of women. She [his mother] said I mustn't do stupid things like with girlfriends

Religion and Sexualities

Religious institutions were also sources of information and seemed to shape ways in which these respondents constructed their sexual identities. The findings reveal that most of the information boys and girls obtained from the religious institutions related to abstinence. This response was common irrespective of religious institution, race, geographic location and gender.

Allen, Carol, Anthony, Christians from Radford suggested that in church they learned about abstinence. Allen stated, "I'm a Christian. We learn about relationships, they teach you not to have sexual intercourse before marriage". Anthony confirmed that, "Once I was in the church and so they were talking about sex. That you must wait till after you're married, what it leads to, like to pregnancy, sicknesses". Carol added that in church she learned about "morals, and no sex before marriage". Faruk, a Muslim boy from Heritage also stated that in the Madrassa "They say it's safer not to have sex until you are married, but some children do it".

Thembekile who emphasised his religious convictions throughout the interview argued that in his religion they are advised not to have girlfriends especially a girlfriend with a different religious denomination from theirs, as such girls are likely to tempt them into sexual relations. He stated

In the church we are told not even to have one, cause if you have a girlfriend, maybe outside girlfriend maybe invites you to the home, and then you may be tempted, then there is no power there for me, may be tempted to do sex so you mustn't, but if you have a girlfriend they say do not have sex

Frank from De Hoop also voiced that in church, "They teach us things like how to live, instead of drinking myself drunk and sitting at the back yards like other people, they teach us how to live life properly". Amongst the 32 learners I worked with Nokoazi was the only one who said, "In church they do not teach us about boyfriends and girlfriends or sex".

4.2.2.4 School Practices and Sexuality

In schools, sexual identities are developed, practiced and actively produced. Learners acted and negotiated their sexual identities in diverse ways in the schools. The dress code in the schools was a form of identification, as well as a site and expression of the different sexual identities. Respondents also acquired information about what is and is not 'acceptable' through pedagogical practices and in their interaction with teachers and other learners.

Dress Code

During observations I found that the dress code was an important factor within schools, and that sexualities were expressed through the various ways in which the learners personalized

their uniforms. While in all schools, expectations regarding boys' and girls' uniform was similar, there were differences in how uniforms were worn and the level of neatness. These differences were particularly noticeable across geographic locations. In all four schools, learners were expected to wear proper school uniform. For boys it included grey pants, white shirts and tops or blazers that differed in the four schools. Girls were expected to have on their dresses or pants with white shirts and blazers or tops depending on each school.

In Radford the school attire was very formal. Boys wore grey pants, white shirts with ties and blazers. Girls on the other hand wore either dresses or pants with a tie and blazer. Amongst the boys and girls at Radford there seemed to be no uniqueness in how they wore their uniform, except that it was very neat compared to the other schools.

There were various ways in which the girls in the other three schools individualized their uniforms. In Heritage girls wore either skirts, grey pants with white shirts or tracksuits. The Muslim girls in this school wore their tracksuits underneath their dresses while the other girls wore either pants or dresses. The dresses were to a certain extent individualized, where some girls had dresses at knee length while others wore quite short dresses. In Heritage, there seemed to be a large number of Muslim girls. These girls were identified through their headscarves. What was interesting though was that on any given day I would see some girls with their headscarfs and the following day the same girl would have her hair brushed and uncovered. The headscarves, it would seem, were part of the day's look for some girls rather than it being an identifier of any religious affiliation. In Heritage, all boys wore grey pants and white shirts. What looked different though, was the deliberate level of neatness in their dressing. For example, some boys had their white shirts well ironed and tucked neatly in their pants while others wore their shirts loosely tucked into their pants. It also seemed that this dress mode differentiated the boys in that those with loosely tucked shirts were perceived as 'more cool' by the girls, while the neater boys were viewed as 'the serious' or 'nerdy' type.

Dress codes were most variable in Zingisani Secondary. Here, many girls wore their skirts very short and tight. A couple of girls also wore black lycra pantyhose underneath their short skirts, something that made them look neat but also differentiated them from other girls

in the school. Some of the boys at this school wore their shirts hanging over their trousers with sleeves rolled up.

During my observation in De Hoop, a large number of learners wore fashionable tops of different colours. While this was a poor environment, many of these tops bore different brands, like Nike, Billabong and the like. Uniforms were therefore personalized by adding a certain brand product. Most girls wore tight pants and like in the aforementioned school, many of the boys wore their shirts hanging over the grey pants or loosely tucked into the trousers. A distinctive feature of learners in this school was something they called the 'passion gap'.⁴

Curriculum Content

Life Orientation is one of the learning areas in schools and it is here where teachers educated learners on issues around sexuality. The findings of this study thus reveal that schools are of importance in imparting information on sexuality. As with parents, in schools, the focus was also on the physical changes and abstinence.

All the respondents irrespective of gender, race and geographical location had gained some information on sexuality from school. Frank from De Hoop provides a common response amongst learners by stating that

In grade 7 in Natural Science, we were taught how our body will undergo changes. He told us that we would start developing sperm cells and warned us not to go far with a girl, like having sex because if the sperm cell got released into her, she could have a baby

Anthony, from Radford agreed that he got information on sexuality from school and the main focus was on abstinence and safe sex. He stated, "At school they said like, you mustn't have sex before you are married, or you can, but you must have safe sex. Don't be pressured by your friends and things like that". In Radford specialists in the medical field such as doctors and nurses were also invited to give presentations on issues regarding sexuality. Carol from Radford stated, "In school they basically only told us about sex and the organs and stuff. Like in Standard 5 we had like a doctor". Shane from Heritage stated,

⁴ Passion Gap- is the removal of the four front top teeth. It is widely believed one becomes a better kisser hence the emphasis on passion. This is popular mostly among the coloured community in the Cape Flats.

“Some people from the clinics came to us and they had a demonstration and they talked to us about puberty and sex”.

In Heritage, the four girls mentioned some of the issues Miss Jones, their life skills teacher, covered issues related to sexuality. Zeena stated, “our teacher, Miss Jones, she speaks to us about sex and diseases and gays and lesbians and intercourse and all that stuff like that”. Charmaine stated

Miss Jones teaches us about sex and how you get pregnant. Like once, she taught us that you can get pregnant without having sex. I was like how, how, how? She said if a boy masturbates and he fingers you and the sperm is still on his fingers and it goes inside you then you can fall pregnant. She's like the main source

Thembekile, from Zingisani added that, “Like in the school they say you must have at least one girlfriend, and be faithful”.

4.2.2.5 Popular Media Representations and Sexuality

The media plays a role in shaping adolescents sexual identity construction. It influences sexual identity construction as some of the boys and girls role models are celebrities they get to know through the media, and they also learn about relationships.

Media and Sexuality

All the respondents in the four schools watched television programmes and 31 of the 32 had watched age restricted movies despite being aware they were underage. Reasons for watching those movies as well as the information gained varied. Irrespective of geographic location or race, common reasons amongst many of the girls, included wanting to be part of the group, learning about sex, and relationships. For Example Rene from Heritage watched x-rated movies because her friends did and she wanted to be part of the discussion when the topic arose. She states, “I watched it because... then on Monday morning when I come to school then it's like the hot topic. And then I just listen to them, like this lady was undressed and the man was da, da, da”.

Others proposed that they learn from watching television or x-rated movies. For the most part, media seem to provide models of behaviour about relationships. Learners seemed to

take such models seriously considering these as appropriate gauges for what happens in real life. Zeena from Heritage argued that, “You mostly learn about pairs, and the breaking up of relationships and about trust and honesty, and lying to your partner. You must always speak the truth to him and be open”. Charmaine from the same school gave an example of one of the programmes she likes watching and how she relates this to her own experiences. She stated,

Yes I watch Backstage and there are a lot of relationships and love and triangles going on. Sometimes it's like I can relate to it. Now if I'm the girl and my boyfriend's the guy on television and what are they going to do then, I can relate to it. If we were in the same situation then I could see what's the girl going to do

Nokoazi adds, “I saw it in television. It was more learning to practice. If I watch alone I do get those feelings but if I'm with my friends then we just laugh at those things”.

Boys acknowledged that they had all watched age-restricted movies. However, they did not volunteer information about what they learnt or thought about the films, except the boys from Radford who, together with their female peers, offered the following perspective. While they also used the media as a source of information, they were vocal about its negative influence since, according to them, the media was the main cause of early teenage experimentation. They argued that the media was being too explicit on issues regarding sexuality. Tracy stated, “I think what's making boys more aware of this stuff and wanting boys to do it is all these notice boards hanging around, do it like this, then they think O I must do it now”. In agreement with her, Randy added, “I mean it is a natural thing, we were made like this, but they don't have to put it on all the boards”. Carol suggested, “They mention that it's all over and it is because it's use a condom, it's showing all over and now people think O well its okay to have sex as long as you use a condom”. Mike from the same school added that the media is concentrated mostly on safe sex and for him the media ought to focus more on messages of abstinence. He stated, “All the ads on television, have safe sex and use a condom. All these love life adverts. Anything that says abstinence could be a cure for AIDS”.

4.2.2.6 Risk, Choice, HIV/AIDS and Youth Sexuality

Making choices seemed influenced by various factors in their geographical location as well as ways in which they are beginning to understand their sexualities. Learners were aware of the existence of HIV/AIDS. It would seem that publicising issues on sex is influencing ways in which they are experiencing their sexualities. Carol from Radford captured the dominant trend in the boys and girls responses when she stated, “I think the AIDS pandemic has got us so mad, because people, they talk about it, people are aware they can experiment. In the olden days it wasn't bad because no one spoke about it. You would only know about that sort of stuff when you're in marriage and when you're old enough too”.

Time, Space and Sexuality

Sexual exploration takes place at a particular time and space. The boys and girls in this study had differing opinions on the ‘right time’ to have sex. Generally time referred to age, the length of the relationship, the right person and levels of trust. While there were similarities, responses varied across race, gender and geographical location.

Four respondents, two from Radford and two from Zingisani suggested that the right time to have sex depended on how much they loved and were loved by their partners. This they argued could be determined by the *length of the relationship*. Carol from Radford stated, “I stick with you must really love them and you must know that they really love you. I mean if I have been with a guy for say two years, then I'll maybe consider it.... I think, maybe one year”. Allen, a boy from the same school stated, “Once I've found the right chick and the right time”. Nokoazi from Zingisani added, “When you have been going out for maybe two years and he loves you”. Andile from the same school concurred with the above. He stated, “I think you have to wait like six months or a year before you can have sex with a girl and you trust your girlfriend enough to have sex with her. You have to know her parents, her past relationships I mean know everything about her”.

Respondents from Radford suggested that intimacy is also contingent on the level of involvement and whether or not there is respect and trust in the relationship. Randy and Carol, maintained that they can only have sex with their boyfriends if they bonded well in the relationship, and this bond depended on how much they loved one another, levels of respect and trust. Randy stated, “You have to respect each other's decisions no matter what.

You must be able to talk to a person openly about, like if he wants to have sex, you have to be able to say to him no I don't want to or I'm not ready. You have to love each other". Carol on the other hand stated "It depends on how close you get. The person must be someone that you can imagine being with for the rest of your life". Shirley from De Hoop concurred with the above as she stated, "You should have mutual love, know the person enough to trust him". While for these three girls 'the bond' was equated to love and trust, 'the bond' for Laura and Tracy from Radford was marriage. Laura stated, "Personally the bond that I will have to have with a guy before I sleep with him will be marriage. I'm not prepared to go that far if there is a chance that we won't be together again after that. Guys use girls so I wouldn't go that far". Tracy suggested that "You should have a bond, you should be on the verge of marriage".

The right time to have sex was also influenced by age and the feeling of maturity by both boys and girls in the four schools. Andile from Zingisani suggested, "Like my body, it's physically grown...like now, I feel like I am ready now". Three boys and girls from Heritage and De Hoop also stated that the right time depends on how mature they are and would therefore delay sex until they were responsible. Shane from Heritage stated, "When I'm older and mature and that. I don't think I can take responsibility now". Charmaine from the same school added, "When I'm older, and I discipline myself. Like when I'm over 18 then I will consider it, being intimate with my boyfriend". Sharon from De Hoop was willing to delay sex because she was promised a twenty-first bash if she kept her virginity. She stated, "Well if he wants to get intimate, really, really, intimate like have sex, I'll just tell him you going to have to wait till I'm over my 21 cause I can't break my words I want to get to my 21st bash because I really want to stay a virgin till I'm 21".

Fear of pregnancy seemed to be one of the reasons why some boys and girls (four of the 32) hesitated having sex. For example, Shane from Heritage stated, "okay, now I'm like kissing with a girl, and I'm thinking now, go on, I might want to go on but then I say no, I can't have sex with her now. Now she'll get pregnant and you'll have to get married to her, you going to have to stop school, you going to have to find a job, it's not going to work out". Charmaine from the same school had also been in a situation where she had to resist the feelings of 'the moment' and not to engage in sex. She explains the experience by stating that, "It's like you reach this point where you want to do something and you like no, no.

Because one part of you says yes, yes, yes. Because I understand man, I mean like if I must fall pregnant now and I must leave school, and no, no". Sharon from De Hoop stated that "sometimes when we're like on the bed, you want to, but then I think no, no, no. When I'm older and I discipline myself and I'm responsible for myself, then I will think about it". Andile from Zingisani added, "I told myself that no I am not ready, then I stopped".

Three girls reported that they could not have sex out of fear of being used. Nokoazi from Zingisani suggested, "I keep telling myself, what if that guy doesn't like me, maybe he's just using me". Randy from Radford added, "But you do get some guys who just, hi let's have sex. They use you and they leave. Guys are players". Carol from the same school also pointed that some boys get into relationships just for sex. She states, "Most boys just take a girlfriend because they think okay now I'm going to get sex from her. It's not like they are going to commit themselves to the girl". Charne, from Heritage unlike the above girls who felt that boys were using them if they engaged in sex, felt she was not a recipient but a willing participant in the sexual encounter. For example about the boys she had had sex with, she says "they can say nothing because they did it to me and I done it to them".

As has been outlined above many boys and girls suggested that they were still abstaining from sex. There were however moments when advances for sex were very explicit. During those moments two girls stated that they managed to stop their partners from advancing. Zoleka from Zingisani said she stops her boyfriend when he touches her in ways that she thinks may lead to sex. She stated, "The way he touches you, maybe you can see if he wants to undress you. But if my boyfriends want to do that I just stop them". This exchange between Shaakeira from De Hoop and the interviewer is illustrative:

S: We first sit, we talk, then he comes closer, kiss me in my neck, get together lay on the bed, not on top of each other, like sideways, he sleeps here I sleep there, we kiss and if he goes further by touching me where I don't want him to touch I say he must stop.

I: If he touches you where?

S: Ya, like on my legs. My back, I'm very ticklish, and here on the sides. And like my private parts

This cohort of respondents, in deciding the right time to have sex, used differing indicators. Age was perceived as the most consistent determining feature since many learners felt that they needed to be more mature and responsible first. The right time was also determined by

how much one loved their partner and the length of the relationship. Allen however, suggested that it was a challenge to delay sex because “once you start kissing and whatever, you can't just stop. You can't control yourself. Because you just, you don't think about those things. You just relax”. Once decisions were made, these learners therefore indicated that they engaged in sexual activities.

Sex, Intimacy and Relationships

Both boys and girls engaged in sexual relations but there was a perception amongst five of the twelve girls from that the boys were the ones who had a sexual drive and wanted to have sex at an early age, while girls believed they could control and thus delay their sexual relationships. Girls held views that boys' sex drives are uncontrollable and insatiable. Such conceptions of sex and sexuality are deeply embedded in heterosexual constructions of male pro-activity and female passivity.

Carol from Radford stated, “For boys it always has to lead to sex, that is why they say guy's brains lie in their balls and girls lie in their fingers. All they think is sex”. Randy from the same school added, “...I'm saying for guys it's now, for girls it's like still coming. A guy thinks about it (Sex) more like now...for a girl it is like when they are twenty-five years old, that is when they think of it”. Nosizo from Zingisani also pointed that, “What boys see in girls is sex, sex, sex”. Shirley from De Hoop added, “Girls think ahead, if I do this, what happens, boys don't think of the consequences”. In addition Laura from Radford was of the view that this urge that boys have in relation to sex is a result of their biological development as she stated, “I think guys follow their hormones and girls think about their emotions”.

Sexual Experimentation

There seemed to be a belief amongst most girls (11 of the 16) that sex was something to explore later in their lives. However, a few had engaged in oral sex and two in penetrative sex. Two from Radford and one from, De Hoop and Radford suggested that they had engaged in oral and penetrative sex respectively. Interestingly, the two respondents from Radford were from the affluent and more conservative school environment where, together with their peers, were articulate about the ‘wrongness’ of early experimentation. Allen a

boy from Radford stated, "It was exploration; I had foreplay with her like petting and whatever". Carol from the same school also suggested "there are a lot of things one can do in a relationship, like giving a guy blow job or getting fingering". Sharon from De Hoop, a poor school environment added, "Ya, we were at home and we sat under the covers and held each other, doing all the stuff that big people do on the movies, like touching, and all that".

Only three girls reported going further than foreplay. In these experiences, the expectation is that girls wait for boys' advances. Charne, from Heritage stated that she waited for the sexual advances of her boyfriends instead of initiating sex. She waited because she expects her boyfriend to have more experience than her. She stated, "You just wanna do it [have sex], but you know sometimes I'm scared to touch him, so I rather let him touch me first because I know he's got experience, but I also touch him because it is going to look so boring. I also go with the flow (ok) see, make it exciting". While the two girls from Zingisani maintained they were not sexually active, they too felt girls ought to respond to boys sexual advances instead of initiating. This was implied when Nokoazi stated, "...in giving the boy a condom you are already showing him you want to have sex with him, it is not right". Nosizo also added that she cannot just give her boyfriend a condom, but, "I will kiss him and that, until we are ready, then I will wait for him to say I don't have a condom and then I can give him".

The two girls who were already sexually active argued that they had taken a length of time in a relationship with the partners and had developed a level of trust before they engaged in sex. Thobeka stated, "He is 21. I had sex with him. I know him". Charne' added, "[T]he first one was my boyfriend, we were jolling, we knew each other and that, his parents know me". Charne also mentioned that she had engaged in sexual relations with more than one person. She stated that,

It doesn't feel right doing it with the same guy again, and like that one we did it 3 times, like when we got a chance to be alone then we might as well done it but it was right. The one was, 18 year old was at his house, and the 16 year old was at my aunties, in my auntie's toilet (laughs) with the 21 year old it was at my house ...we were alone, and then I did it in the park and then we done it in his bakkie

In their sexual encounters Thobeka and Charne' argued that they had used birth control measures such as condoms. Thobeka said she was also on injection and felt protected, as she stated, "I feel like I am protecting myself. I like my injection. It is my protection because some guys do not like condoms". Charne added, "Sex without a condom, no, I don't still wanna fall pregnant". Protection in this case was in relation to fear of pregnancy rather than contraction of any sexually transmitted disease or HIV/AIDS.

While only two girls from Heritage and Zingisani mentioned being sexually active, there may have been some boys and girls who are also sexually active but whom I did not have individual interviews. However, the majority of the respondents argued there were delaying sex out of fear of falling pregnant or impregnating a girl and because of lack of trust in their relationships.

Condom use

The boys and girls were aware of the existence of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases and that one of the preventative measures was the use of condoms when engaging in sex.

The responses on condom use were in relation to the video on relationships that the boys and girls watched. In the video Carry gives her boyfriend Paul a condom. There were mixed reactions by both and girls across, gender, race and geographical location to this. Almost all the boys from the four schools felt it was wrong for the girl to give the boy a condom. Bradley from Radford stated, "He already had one so he didn't need hers". This implied that boys were expected to have condoms not girls. Mike from the same school added, "He (Paul) didn't expect that she wanted to have sex". Wade from Heritage also suggested, "If a girl gives me a condom, I'd say what is wrong with you?" Faruk from the same school added, "I would tell her to slow down, it's not appropriate". Andile from Zingisani also shared the same view when he commented, "It is bad that while you are busy fore-playing a girl then you find a condom". Ivan from De Hoop stated, "She doesn't have to".

A girl from Zingisani and one from Radford seemed to associate giving a condom to a boy with availability to have sex. They felt they would not give their boyfriends condoms

because boys would think they wanted to have sex. Nokoazi from Zingisani suggested, “I won't, then he thinks I am the one who wants it”. There was also fear of rejection if the boys did not take the condom, as Randy from Radford stated, “she's gonna feel this hurt if he doesn't do it”.

Amongst the 32 boys and girls only two girls and a boy from Zingisani and Radford thought it was good for Carry to have given her boyfriend the condom. Thanduxolo from Zingisani stated, “I think it is not bad for a girl to offer a condom to a boy”. Xoliswa from the same school also felt that girls should have their own condoms. She stated, “I think girls should carry their own condoms and give them to the boys, because some boys do not like to use condoms, they want flesh to flesh”. Carol from Radford added that Carry was a “good girl, it's for her own protection”.

These responses highlight that for most (29 of the 32) learners it was not appropriate for Carry to have given her boyfriend the condom. Bradley implied this when he said Carry's boyfriend might already have his own condom. Faruk from Heritage added, “He (Paul) already had one so he didn't need hers”. This was argued even though in the video Paul was never said to have a condom.

Although the general feeling amongst girls was that it is wrong to give one's boyfriend a condom, girls from the four schools felt they would carry condoms out of fear of being raped. Carol from Radford stated, “It's good to keep a condom with you if you are going to go anywhere, okay, because I always think like say, if someone comes and wants to rape you, you give them a condom”. Tracy from the same school added, “I also think the same thing, like you get into a situation you can't get out of, like really bad and you know you have to do it, than you have the condom”. This was also maintained by Thobeka from Zingisani when she stated, “I feel comfortable, because sometimes people can come and rape me and I tell him lets not do it in a dangerous way we have to use a condom”. Xoliswa from the same school added, “Girls should carry condoms around for safety sake, what if someone want to rape her”. Shirley from De Hoop also mentioned that, “Every time I go to a party I carry condoms in case anything happens”. While the girls above mentioned carrying condoms because of the fear of being raped, they were also aware that it would not be easy for them to negotiate condom use with a rapist. As, when asked if they could ask a

rapist to use a condom they said 'no', arguing that they think it happens quickly and they will be scared at the time.

It seems therefore that only a few girls who would give their boyfriends condoms if they were to engage in sex. Like the boys, girls argued that boys ought to have condoms on them. Girls only mentioned carrying condoms out of fear of being raped and a few said they would give their boyfriends condoms. There are a few learners who still doubt the reliability of condoms.

While the dominant trend was that condoms can be used as a protective measure, one of the 16 boys in the four schools felt condoms were unreliable in protecting one from HIV infection, preventing the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases and preventing pregnancy. Allen from Radford argued that condoms cannot protect one from HIV infection because in an interview, the durex owner was asked, "If an HIV infected lady made you an offer, would you sleep with her using your condom? He said no. So that raises questions of can HIV get through the condom. I'm afraid that they can".

As already stated, condoms use was associated with protection against pregnancy and as such fear of the unreliability of the devise was in response to of falling pregnant as these two girls from Heritage and one from De Hoop suggested. They argued that condoms were unreliable because they break and one can therefore run the risk of falling pregnant. Charmaine from Heritage argued, "what if we did have sex and we put the condom on and the condom breaks and then I will bring them up and it will be on me. Charne from the same school mentioned that she does not trust condoms because "I used but then I was scared because the condom broke I don't trust them". Shirley from De Hoop added, "What happens if the condom breaks, then what?"

4.3 CONCLUSION

The results above reveal how a small cohort of boys and girls in four high schools are constructing their sexual identities in complex discursive spaces. What became significantly evident is the influence of heterosexuality on sexual identities among the learners, evidenced in the way they understand and experience agency in relationships as well as in the way they present a 'self' through body presentations, music, and modes of

dressings. While boys' forms of representation were primarily associated with other males, representation seemed submerged in constructions of the male gaze amongst girls. What seems evident amongst this cohort therefore is an assumed heterosexual frame of reference from which sexual subject positions are understood and interpreted. These respondents speak and act from a heterosexual frame of reference, one that puts ascendancy on male privilege and female passivity.

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The study sought to examine how some grade nine learners in the four high schools are constructing their sexual identities. Analysis of the data reveals that femininities and masculinities are constantly created, adapted, and contested in everyday interactions among boys and girls, among boys and among girls (Reddy, 2003). Butler (1990) adds that masculinities and femininities can therefore be seen as “imitative text”. The boys and girls in this study demonstrated the complexities in the construction of their sexual identities through the situated gendered performances.

A key finding in the study related to how heterosexuality works in the creation of a sexual self, even in instances where other forms of sexuality were present. For this cohort of respondents, making sense of their sexual selves was very often in relation to the ‘other’, which more often than not, was of the opposite sex, as heterosexuality is socially constructed along masculine and feminine dichotomies (Jackson, 1999). Since heterosexuality is premised on desire for the opposite sex, gender difference and the sexual otherness of the desired object, for these respondents' sexual identities were constructed by the ‘performance’ of their expected gendered roles. These expected performances often shaped the interaction between the sexes. What follows is a brief discussion of the four themes below, that draws together the analysis and related literature discussed in chapter 2.

- Complicity, Performativity and Relationships
- Sexual Hierarchies: Power and Control
- Complex Body Identities
- Risk, Choice and Youth Sexuality

5.2 COMPLICITY, PERFORMATIVITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

In the main, heterosexuality seemed to frame the ways in which these boys and girls made sense of their expected roles and how they positioned and were positioned within the various phases of initiating, negotiating and embarking on the actual relationship. While the nature of this engagement was embedded within an understanding of the expected feminine and masculine roles, what the data revealed was a nuanced series of performances that ‘played’ into these perceived roles and on the surface subscribed to the ‘expected’. The respondents seemed to

perform their gendered roles, where males were perceived as ‘initiators’ and females as the ‘pursued’, even in circumstances that allowed for subversion of roles. A study by Harrison et al (2001) also demonstrated that gender roles drove the respondents’ experiences of their sexuality, where boys were expected to determine the nature of the relationships they had with girls. This may imply that girls are passive in the initiating and negotiating of their relationships while boys are active. However, this data suggests that dichotomizing feminine and masculine roles into distinct categories of *the pursuer* and *the pursued* obscures the complex ways in which the discourse is on the one hand maintained, and on the other, subverted.

A striking feature in this data was how girls in particular, understood those roles as a ‘performance’ while boys on the other hand, *just knew* and accepted that it was always so. Girls were active in both maintaining and subverting the discourse where, for example, by using networks in initiating relationships, girls underplayed the expectation that boys are the ones who will have interest in girls and then pursue them. However, in their use of networks girls still accorded boys a chance to perform the role of being initiators because after they had shown their interest in the boys, the latter were the ones still making the decision of whether or not to pursue the girl.

In addition to the above, relationships seemed to be negotiated through heterosexual hierarchies where males were viewed as having the power to make choices and act.

5.3 SEXUAL HIERARCHIES: POWER AND CONTROL

Heterosexuality is patriarchal in structure meaning that males’ position and are positioned higher on the hierarchical scale (Jackson 1999). Butler (1990) adds that heterosexualization of desires also produces asymmetrical opposition between feminine and masculine, as men are positioned and position themselves as sexual subjects while women position and are positioned as sexual objects.

In this study initiating relationships was viewed as the males’ prerogative whereby the boys positioned themselves and were also positioned by girls higher on the hierarchical scale. These unequal power relations began in initiating and negotiating relationship processes. In this regard, this study revealed that boys were viewed as initiators while girls were pursued and performed a subjective role. Hierarchical positioning of boys was also illustrated in networking

engagements, where friends were used to convey messages to the boys the girls liked. The girls still waited for the boys to approach them. In playing into these roles, girls subscribed and complied with predetermined sets of hierarchical power relations, hereby positioning the boys higher and thus reducing the girls' power of negotiation within a relationship. Responses in the results of the study coincide with Varga's (1997) study where he found that males were often in control and girls adhered to their partners' demands. While his study related particularly to the Zulu culture where in power relations women are taught to be submissive while men ought to be strong and assertive, this study revealed a dominance of this pattern irrespective of race, ethnicity or geographic location. Even though girls at the four schools illustrated contrasting responses to the power and control within relationships, the dominant pattern is still one of male control and female surrender. While girls from Radford and Heritage described some level of control, they had not actualised this in current relationships. In De Hoop and Zingisani, some girls accepted this ultimate control by the boys, taking for granted that heterosexual relationships operated in this way.

The power relations within relationships may also be a result of the age difference within relationships as girls often preferred older boys. This was also suggested in Harrison et al (2001) where age was a determining factor in relationships. The reasons for this preference of older boys varied amongst the girls in this study. Unlike in Harrison et al (2001) study, where older men were preferred because they could offer money and other material goods, the girls in this study preferred older boys because they could offer their time to be with their girlfriends while boys of the same age or younger still enjoyed being in the company of other boys. Older boys are also a form of security because they could take care of their girlfriends and they were also experienced in relationships. Boys their age or younger on the other hand were considered immature or childish and inexperienced in relationships.

This age difference may be a contributing factor to why girls are sometimes rendered powerless within relationships. This may also be the reason why girls usually have difficulty in negotiating safe sex or delaying sex with their partners. The power relations can therefore also be associated with age and levels of experience in relationships. These results imply that it maybe difficult for young girls to negotiate within relationships, because they perceive themselves as inexperienced.

5.4 COMPLEX BODY IDENTITIES

The attention given to the body was an expression of identification with femininity and masculinity. Femininity and masculinity were expressed through different body presentations that included dressing, movement and grooming. The boys' and girls' understanding of their bodies and different ways in which they present their bodies expressed how they were making sense of who they are, as today the body has become part of the self project (Shilling, 1993). Turner (1996) adds that, the self is a 'representational self', whose value and meaning is ascribed to the individual by the shape and image of the external body.

The girls' focus was on ensuring a good body image. This was done through the types of clothes they wore, (e.g. mini skirts and tight pants), lengths and nature (tight, short, long, with stockings) of their school uniform, variation in hairstyles and wearing headscarves. In addition, the size of the body also served as a form of body representation. Girls intimated that much of the body representations were to be attractive to the male body.

Boys also focussed on body representations that included dressing (and wearing certain brands), loose clothes, and different hairstyles. Unlike girls though, in order to prove one's maleness (to other boys), one was 'required' to listen to certain types of music and play roughly with one another. These masculine performances it seems were to prove one's maleness to other males rather than getting the attention of girls. Therefore, unlike girls whose representations were in relation to boys, boys representations were more often than not in relation to each other. Notwithstanding the above, boys did consider girls' attention in their representations and, for example, acted differently when around girls than when in a group of boys alone. Around girls boys acted mature because they wanted to earn the respect from the girls. Boys also acted mature in relationships, as there was expectation by girls that boys ought to be more experienced than them.

5.5 RISK, CHOICE AND YOUTH SEXUALITY

Youth have been regarded as a group at risk of HIV/AIDS infection particularly since their rates of infection has increased. They are argued to be engaging in risky behaviour because they are at a stage of life characterized by experimentation. Jessor (1998) has argued that these risky behaviours may result from various factors such as poverty, racial and ethnic discrimination as people in such circumstances may have low perceived life-chances. Social practices also

influence risk taking where in some societies, there are strong standards of regulating sexual behaviour (Jessor, 1998). Lack of parental guidance or supervision, may also put adolescents at risk because they are alone most of the time. The results in this study revealed that sexual experimentation is evident and that amongst this cohort of boys and girls, it took place at the boys or girls' home, often in the absence of parents.

What became evident in this study was the fact that the boys and girls were knowledgeable about risky sexual behaviours. Unlike in Varga's (1997) study where risky sexual behaviour frequently continued despite the awareness of the negative consequences, in this study the boys and girls argued that they got information from their parents, the school, religious groups, media and friends and that the information was used to make choices about sexual behaviour. Many reported abstaining because they feared unwanted pregnancies (boys and girls alike). What this study revealed was the way in which these respondents used the information to exercise agency in the choices they made.

Age seems an important indicator for sexual debut. Amongst this cohort, age seemed associated with length and depth of the relationship and concomitant levels of trust. However, the age of sexual debut may be influenced by the age difference between boys and girls since girls suggested their preference for older boys. Indeed the two who are sexually active in this study are those who have older boyfriends. Such a finding seems consistent with a study by Harrison et al (2001) who also found that girls who initiated sex at the age of twelve were in relationships with older men. This age difference in relationships, which usually ranges between four and six years, has been argued to lead to risky sexual behaviours such as unprotected sex due to girl's limited power in sexual negotiation (Harrison et al, 2001). Not ruling out the possibility of a girl's unlimited power in such relationships, the girls in this study reported using condoms in every sexual encounter with their older partners.

In this study learners had adequate information about HIV/AIDS, STD's and behaviour that could put one at the risk of infection, such as unprotected sex and sharing of things like needles and razor blades. Those learners who were sexually active, it seems, considered the risks associated with choices they made. In the wake of HIV/AIDS, the respondents in this study seem to be exercising their agency and making informed choices in relation to condom use, unlike in a study by Lugoe and Klepp (1996) where about 26.8% of the sexually active students had not used condoms. While the reasons for use of condoms are largely associated with protection

against pregnancy, they are nevertheless using some form of protection that would inadvertently act to protect against HIV/AIDS infection. So while the reasons may not be for the intention of protection against disease, they seem to make choices that will or will not have an impact on their life chances. The respondents in this study may use condoms because condoms are easily available to them and parents also advise their children to use them as protection from pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. This result therefore questions the idea of teenagers as a helpless group that experiments sexually without consideration of the consequences. However, this result does not rule out the possibility that some boys and girls may still engage in risky sexual behaviour because even though Thobeka argued she had used condoms in all her sexual encounters, she argued that she was also on injection because some boys don't like using condoms. This implies that if she were in a relationship with a boy who may not like condoms, she would have sex without condoms, despite the fact that she knows the risks associated with such behaviour, and her belief in condom use. This illustrates how, sometimes it may be difficult to use condoms in every sexual encounter as a result of the eagerness to please partners within relationships.

Unlike in studies like that by Skinner (2001) where the respondents have argued that they were afraid to negotiate condom use because this implied they did not trust their partners or they were infected with HIV/AIDS, among the learners in this study the use of condoms was a form of protection especially against pregnancy and HIV/AIDS.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSION

In trying to answer the question on how grade nine learners in selected schools were constructing their sexual identities in the context of HIV/AIDS, what seemed evident was how heterosexuality seemed to shape the sexual constructions. The learners seemed to understand what was expected of them and therefore performed the expected feminine and masculine roles.

This awareness of the expected roles led to various performances where on the one hand the learners played into the expected roles such as the pursuer and the pursued. On the other hand an understanding of these roles as performed led to girls subverting them in ways that included, for example, making use of friends in initiating relationships.

Relationships seem one of the most important discursive spaces where this cohort of learners makes sense of their sexual selves. Through involvement in initiating and negotiating and participating in actual relationships, they seem to produce particular sexual identities that are premised on heterosexual hierarchies. Girls, it seems reinscribe identities of sexual powerlessness by using social networks, choosing older boys, using condoms for fear of pregnancy and by representing the body as a form of attraction to males. Boys on the other hand, seemed to accept roles unquestioningly and assumed that it was expected.

Family practices often worked to sustain dominant constructions of sexuality where mothers often confined discussions to physical changes and fathers rarely participated in discussions. Silences associated with sex and sexuality, it would seem precluded youth from asking questions that might move discussions beyond the physical to include issues of desire, need and emotions.

Schools, like family practices, often foreclosed rather than allowed for a different discourse in the classroom. Here too information was limited to physical changes, obscuring issues associated with feelings, desires, and control.

Silences in family and school discourses as well learner's interpretations of media representations of sexuality may preclude more pertinent questions of how heterosexuality works to reproduce particular sexual identities.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth are not to be viewed as a group that acts without thinking, but exercise agency and as thus make choices. This was highlighted in this study as the boys and girls took into consideration the risks of engaging in unprotected sex such as pregnancy. A few also thought of sexually transmitted diseases.

To curb diseases the policies and practices designed have to encompass the diverse ways in which people experience their sexualities. In planning youth HIV/AIDS interventions contexts are to be taken into consideration as the youth is not a homogenous group that experiences sexualities similarly. The discursive spaces within which youth construct and make meaning of their sexuality are complex and varied. These spaces are not bound by time and space but are influenced by globalization, and past and present experiences. HIV/AIDS as a discursive space shaping sexual identities in general becomes an important determinant to how youth ought to make choices, one which this study reveals is not one youth understand as critical. Thus, in developing programmes, special care should be taken to ensure that youth understand risk of HIV/AIDS in explicit ways.

In devising life skill programmes, the focus ought to move beyond mediating knowledge of physical body changes only to include, for example, issues of desire, desirability, emotional maturity, negotiation skills and the like. Importantly though, programmes should include modules that question heterosexual assumptions of what is or is not 'allowed'. Such programmes could include the use of scenarios in which youth participate in simulated relationships where issues of power, control and unquestioning acceptance of certain behaviours is questioned. Programmes may also question representations of sexuality made in the media.

There is need for further research on youth in South Africa where questions are posed regarding the rigid racial, class and gender boundaries that have been an influence of apartheid and have often been used to classify youth in this country. There is need to look

at youth across race, class and gender as the effects of globalization have cut across these classification and have produced new contextual realities for youth today. Global and local environments have changed, thereby creating fluid identities that no longer adhere to the rigid boundaries of class, race, geographic location and status as this study illustrated.

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Appendix 1 Provincial HIV/AIDS statistics in South Africa

Table 1 by Dorrington, Bradshaw and Budlender (2002) below illustrates HIV/AIDS prevalence rates among the youth in the nine the provinces.

| Prevalence | EC | FS | GT | KZ | *LM | MP | NC | NW | WC | SA |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Youth (15-24) | 12.5% | 15.6% | 13.0% | 19.7% | 12.1% | 15.9% | 6.7% | 14.4% | 3.3% | 13.7% |
| Male youth (15-24) | 4.9% | 6.7% | 5.9% | 9.1% | 5.3% | 7.0% | 2.7% | 6.4% | 1.1% | 5.8% |
| Female youth (15-24) | 20.1% | 24.1% | 19.8% | 30.2% | 19.4% | 25.0% | 10.6% | 22.2% | 5.5% | 21.6% |
| Antenatal clinics | 26.5% | 32.6% | 29.8% | 38.7% | 22.3% | 33.1% | 17.2% | 27.7% | 11.4% | 29.0% |

Table 1. Provincial HIV/AIDS prevalence rates among youth aged 15-24.

Appendix 2: A Letter of Consent for Parents/Guardians

21 July 2003

Dear Parents/Guardians

A research is currently being conducted on sexual identity construction in the context of HIV/AIDS with learners in Grade 9.

I hereby request your permission for your son/daughter to participate in the research project. Research tools will entail a survey, group and individual interviews.

Your co-operation in this regard is much appreciated.

Yours faithfully

.....

Mamatsoso Matsoso-Makhate

MASTERS STUDENT (UCT)

Reply Slip

I.....(Name of parent/guardian) hereby grant/do not grant permission for my son/daughter in Grade 9 to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

.....

SIGNATURE: PARENT/GUARDIAN

.....

DATE

Appendix 3

LEARNER QUESTIONNAIRE 2: KNOWLEDGE OF HIV/AIDS

A. Name

B. Number (to be filled in by researcher).....

C. Tick the appropriate response.

1. AIDS can be contracted by:

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | Sharing the same cup | |
| 2 | Using the same toilet | |
| 3 | Hugging | |
| 4 | Unprotected sex | |
| 5 | Sharing the same needle | |
| 6 | Blood Transfusion | |
| 7 | From mother to child (breastfeeding/pregnancy) | |

2. AIDS can be cured by:

| | | |
|---|---------------------|--|
| 1 | AZT | |
| 2 | Antibiotics | |
| 3 | Non of the above | |

3. AIDS can be transmitted sexually from:

| | | |
|---|------------------|--|
| 1 | Male to female | |
| 2 | Male to male | |
| 3 | Female to female | |

4. I can determine whether my friend or relative has HIV/AIDS if they?

| | | |
|---|-------------------|--|
| 1 | Are thin | |
| 2 | Have sores | |
| 3 | Have hair Loss | |
| 4 | None of the above | |

5. Who has given you the most information relating to HIV/AIDS?

| | | |
|---|---------|--|
| 1 | Home | |
| 2 | School | |
| 3 | Church | |
| 4 | Friends | |

6. I would avoid all forms of contact with anyone I knew who had AIDS?

| | | |
|---|----------|--|
| 1 | YES | |
| 2 | NO/ | |
| 3 | NOT SURE | |

7. I would stop being friends with the person if I discovered that he/she had AIDS.

| | | |
|---|----------|--|
| 1 | YES | |
| 2 | NO | |
| 3 | NOT SURE | |

8. I believe that children with AIDS should be allowed to attend school.

| | | |
|---|----------|--|
| 1 | YES | |
| 2 | NO | |
| 3 | NOT SURE | |

9. I believe that doctors who get AIDS should not be allowed to go on working with their patients.

| | | |
|---|----------|--|
| 1 | YES | |
| 2 | NO | |
| 3 | NOT SURE | |

10. AIDS is not my problem.

| | | |
|---|----------|--|
| 1 | YES | |
| 2 | NO | |
| 3 | NOT SURE | |

11. Someone I know is infected with HIV.

| | | |
|---|----------|--|
| 1 | YES | |
| 2 | NO | |
| 3 | NOT SURE | |

Thank you

LEARNER QUESTIONNAIRE 1: BACKGROUND

1. Pet Name:

2. Number (to be filled in by researcher).....

3. Age (Tick one ✓)

| | | |
|---|---------------------|--|
| 1 | 9 | |
| 2 | 10 | |
| 3 | 11 | |
| 4 | 12 | |
| 5 | 13 | |
| 6 | 14 | |
| 7 | Other: Stipulate | |

4. Gender (Tick one ✓)

| | | |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | Male | |
| 2 | Female | |

5. What is your home language? (Tick one ✓)

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
| 1 | Afrikaans | |
| 2 | English | |
| 3 | Xhosa | |
| 4 | Other (state what it is) | |

6. Name the place where you live.

7. What kind of house do you live in? (Tick one ✓)

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | House in an informal settlement | |
| 2 | House in a township/suburb | |
| 3 | Other | |

8. How many bedrooms are there in your house? (Tick one ✓)

| | | |
|---|------------------------|--|
| 1 | One | |
| 2 | Two | |
| 3 | Three | |
| 4 | More | |
| 5 | Other (please explain) | |

9. Do you have running water in your house? (Tick one ✓)

| | | |
|---|-----|--|
| 1 | Yes | |
| 2 | No | |

10. Do you have electricity? (Tick one ✓)

| | | |
|---|-----|--|
| 1 | Yes | |
| 2 | No | |

11. Who do you live with? (Tick one ✓)

| | | |
|---|---------------------|--|
| 1 | Mother and father | |
| 2 | Father only | |
| 3 | Mother Only | |
| 4 | Grandmother | |
| 5 | Grandparents | |
| 6 | Uncle or Aunt | |
| 7 | Other: Stipulate | |

12. How many brothers and sisters do you have? (Tick one ✓)

| | | |
|---|----------------|--|
| 1 | One | |
| 2 | Two | |
| 3 | Three | |
| 4 | Four | |
| 5 | Five | |
| 6 | More than five | |

13. What is your position in your family? (Tick one ✓)

| | | |
|---|-------------|--|
| 1 | First-born | |
| 2 | Second-born | |
| 3 | Third-born | |
| 4 | Fourth-born | |
| 5 | Fifth-born | |
| 6 | Other | |

14. Who else lives in your house with you?

15. What are your hobbies?

16. Mother's education. (Tick one ✓)

| | | |
|----|--------------------------|--|
| 1 | Grade Four | |
| 2 | Grade Five | |
| 3 | Grade Six | |
| 4 | Grade Seven | |
| 5 | Grade Eight | |
| 6 | Grade Nine | |
| 7 | Grade Ten | |
| 8 | Grade Eleven | |
| 9 | Grade Twelve | |
| 10 | Higher than Grade Twelve | |

17. Father's education. (Tick one ✓)

| | | |
|----|--------------------------|--|
| 1 | Grade Four | |
| 2 | Grade Five | |
| 3 | Grade Six | |
| 4 | Grade Seven | |
| 5 | Grade Eight | |
| 6 | Grade Nine | |
| 7 | Grade Ten | |
| 8 | Grade Eleven | |
| 9 | Grade Twelve | |
| 10 | Higher than Grade Twelve | |

18. Father's Occupation

19. Mother's Occupation

20. Is your father currently employed? (Tick one ✓)

| | | |
|---|-----|--|
| 1 | Yes | |
| 2 | No | |

21. Is your mother currently employed? (Tick one ✓)

| | | |
|---|-----|--|
| 1 | Yes | |
| 2 | No | |

22. Who looks after you when you get home after school? (Tick one ✓)

| | | |
|---|-----------------|--|
| 1 | Mother | |
| 2 | Grandmother | |
| 3 | Brother/sister | |
| 4 | Other (specify) | |

23. Which learning area or subjects do you enjoy most?

24. What do you want to become when you finish school?

25. What religion do you belong to?

26. What do you like most about school?

27. What do you like least about school?

Appendix 5: Focus Group Questions

Questions on the video

Comment on the video you have just watched.

- **What is it in the video that you can relate to?**
- **What happened in your situation?**
- **Are the four friends? (Why)?**
- **What is the problem with these friends? (Why)?**
- **What do friends do together?**
- **Do your friends play a role in your relationships?**
- **What is their role?**
- **What do think about Carry and Soul's relationship?**
- **What did you think or feel about Carry giving Soul the condom?**
- **How would you have reacted if you were in Soul's position?**
- **What would you have done if you were Carry and Soul had just reacted the way he did when Carry gave her the condom?**
- **In what ways should have Carry and Soul handled their relationship? (Why)?**

Appendix 6: Imaginary Scenarios

Scenario 1

Two people have a relationship. Person A age 15

Person B age 19

These two people attend the same secondary school and live in the same area. They have known each other since primary. They think they are ready for a steady relationship, but they differ in opinion as regards to commitment and intimacy.

- What gender is person A and B and why?
- Why do they differ in opinion?

Scenario 2

It is on a Friday night and you are from a party. This guy/girl you met at the part decides to give you and your friends a lift home. You are the last one to be taken home. He/she decides you should go by their house to put the lights on. He/she invites you to the house, and while you are there they ask you to sleep over because they feel tired and cannot drive you home and drive back alone?

- What would you think?
- What would you do and why?

Appendix 7: Interview Schedule

Topics covered are: Family, Friends, School, Media, HIV/AIDS, Relationships.

Questions:

1. In the questionnaire you mentioned that you live with A and that you have X brothers and sisters.
Tell me more about yourself.
 - Who are you closest to in the family? (Why)?
 - What things do you find comfortable discussing with A and not B? (Why)?
2. Who are your friends?
 - How did your friendship begin?
 - What things do you do together?
 - Do you have similar interests as a group?
 - What happens if you want to do something but differ in opinion?
3. How often do you watch television?
 - What are you favourite programmes? (Why)?
 - Do you think it is important to have age restrictions on certain movies or programmes? (Why)?
 - When last did you watch an age restricted movie?
 - Who were you watching it with? (Why)?
 - What information did you acquire from this movie?
 - What would happen if your parents discovered that you were watching this movie?
4. You are now X age, could you tell me about the changes you have experienced?
 - Were you already aware of these changes before you experienced them?
 - Where did you get the information?
 - What were you told?
5. You said you belong to Y religious institution.
 - How often do you attend your religious gathering?
 - What things do you learn her?
 - How do they relate or help you in your every day life?
6. When was your first boy/girl friend?
 - Who was he or she?
 - How did your relationship begin?
 - What things did you do together?

- Why did the first relationship end?
 - Who is your current boy/girl friend and how did this relationship begin?
 - How are things different with this one?
 - What is your ideal boy/girl friend? (Why)?
 - What things do you expect in a relationship? (Why)?
 - Who do you ask or talk to about issues that concern you in relationships? (Why)?
7. In the video yesterday you said it was too early for Carry to give her boyfriend the condom.
- According to you when is it the right time to get intimate in a relationship? (Why)?
 - How long do you have to know the person you are in a relationship with? (Why)?
8. In the questionnaire you said HIV/AIDS could be spread in various ways?
- Where did you get this information?
 - What else was discussed in relation to HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases?
 - Where else can you seek for more information?

Appendix 8: Results of the HIV/AIDS Questionnaire

I present the findings from the KAP survey. The focus of this survey was on soliciting information on learner's knowledge and attitudes on HIV/AIDS (see research design page 53). I therefore present descriptive statistics, on learner's responses to the knowledge and attitude questionnaire.

1. Knowledge about HIV/AIDS

The questions in this section included learner's knowledge on how HIV/AIDS is transmitted or contracted, and ways in which it can be prevented. Questions also covered learner's knowledge of the use of AZT and antibiotics in relation to HIV/AIDS.

2.1.1 Knowledge on Modes of HIV/AIDS Transmission

| Modes of HIV/AIDS Transmission | Number of Respondents | |
|--|-----------------------|-------------|
| | Yes | No |
| Sharing a cup with an infected person | 2 (1.6%) | 122 (98.4%) |
| Using the same toilet with an infected person | 1 (0.8%) | 123 (99.2%) |
| Hugging someone with HIV/AIDS | 3 (2.4%) | 121 (97.6%) |
| Unprotected sex with an HIV infected person | 121 (97.6%) | 3 (2.4%) |
| Sharing the same needles | 120 (96.8%) | 4 (3.2%) |
| Blood transfusion with contaminated blood | 117 (94.4%) | 7 (5.6%) |
| From mother to child (pregnancy/breastfeeding) | 117 (94.4%) | 7 (5.6%) |

Most of the learners knew the multiple ways in which HIV/AIDS could be transmitted from one person to the other. 121 (97.6%) of the learners knew that one risked being infected with HIV if they had unprotected sex. 120 (96.8%) of the learners also knew that sharing the same needle with an infected person would put them at the risk of infection. Most learners also knew that blood transfusion with blood from an HIV infected person may also result in one being infected with the disease. A few learners 3 (2.4%) believed one could also get infected with the virus if they hugged someone with the disease. Some learners believed HIV/AIDS could be transmitted by sharing kitchen utensils such as cups and by sharing a toilet. Most learners also knew that HIV/AIDS could be transmitted from mother to child in pregnancy or during breastfeeding. It seems therefore that learners were knowledgeable about the modes of HIV transmission from one person to the other. The six learners who had misconceptions on the modes of transmission were from Zingisani High School and De Hoop High School.

2.1.2 Sexual Transmission of HIV/AIDS

| HIV/AIDS is Transmitted Sexually from: | Yes | No |
|--|-----------|----------|
| Male to Female | 121 (98%) | 3 (2%) |
| Male to Male | 75 (60%) | 49 (40%) |
| Female to Female | 46 (37%) | 78 (63%) |

121 (98%) of the learners were aware that HIV could spread sexually from males to females while 3(2%) were not sure. 75 (61%) also knew that HIV/AIDS could spread sexually between two males. This indicates that learners were aware that HIV/AIDS is not only a disease for homosexuals but that even heterosexuals are at the risk of contracting the disease. Amongst the 124 learners 46 (37%) believed that HIV/AIDS could spread sexually between two females.

2.1.3 HIV/AIDS Cure

| HIV/AIDS can be Cured by | Agree | Disagree |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| AZT | 10 (8%) | 114 (92%) |
| Antibiotics | 9 (7%) | 115 (93%) |
| None of the above | 105 (85%) | 19 (15%) |

When asked if HIV/AIDS could be cured with AZT or Antibiotics. 105 (85%) said there was no cure for the disease. 10 (8%) believed that AZT could cure the diseases while 9 (7%) believed antibiotics could cure HIV/AIDS. Most respondents were aware that HIV/AIDS cannot be cured even though there are still misconceptions with regard to the use of AZT and antibiotics by people with HIV/AIDS. As some learners thought this drugs could cure the disease.

2.1.4 Ways of determining whether or not a Person has HIV/AIDS

| Ways of determining peoples HIV/AIDS status | Agree | Disagree |
|---|----------|----------|
| When they are thin | 36 (29%) | 88 (71%) |
| Have sores | 41 (33%) | 83 (67%) |
| Have hair loss | 25 (20%) | 99 (80%) |
| None of the above | 66 (53%) | 58 (47%) |

Most learners (53%) knew that it is not possible to determine whether or not a friend or relative had HIV/AIDS through their physical appearance. While 58 (47%) believed one could see if a friend or relative had AIDS by hair loss, sores or when someone is thin.

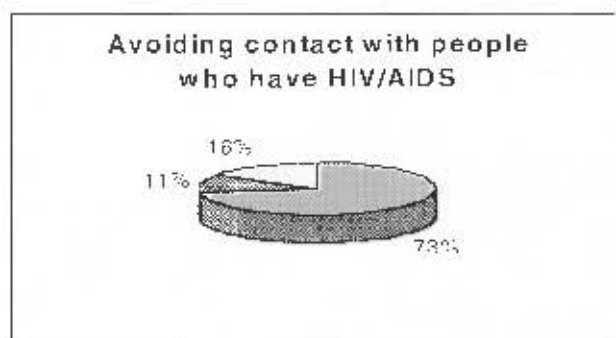
1.5 Sources of HIV/AIDS Information

107 (86%) of the learners stated that most information relating to HIV/AIDS was from school. Some learners also pointed out that they got information on HIV/AIDS from home, from friends and the media. Only 10 (8.1%) said they got information from church. This highlights that there are various sources of information about HIV/AIDS for the learners, but the school is the main source for most respondents.

2.2 Attitudes toward People with HIV/AIDS

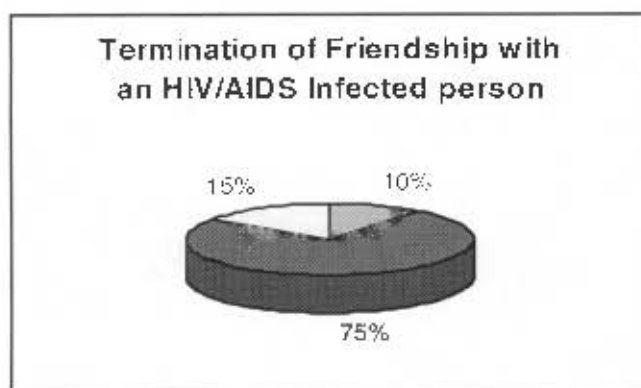
The learners were asked question relating to how they feel and would treat people with HIV/AIDS. These questions were asked because people with HIV/AIDS are often stigmatized. So, the aim was to find if the knowledge the learners had on HIV/AIDS influenced their attitude toward people with the virus.

2.2.1 Avoiding Contact with People with HIV/AIDS



When asked if they would avoid all forms of contact with anyone they knew had HIV/AIDS, 90 (73%) of the learners argued they would **not** avoid contact with a person if they knew that the person had HIV/AIDS. 20 (16%) said they were not sure, while, 14 (11%) said they would not want to keep contact with someone who had the diseases. This implies that despite the knowledge on HIV/AIDS and how it is transmitted, a few learners still fear or have a negative attitude toward people infected with the virus.

2.2 Terminating Friendship with and HIV/AIDS Infected person



92 (74%) of the learners argued that they would **not** stop being friends with someone if that person had AIDS, 19 (15%) were not sure what they would do in such a situation. While 13 (11%) felt they wouldn't want to keep a friend who had HIV/AIDS. It seems that the majority of learners would keep their friendship even if they found their friend was infected with HIV/AIDS.

2.3 Attitude Toward Children with HIV/AIDS in School

| Children with HIV/AIDS should be allowed attend school | Number of Respondents |
|--|-----------------------|
| Yes | 103 (83%) |
| No | 11 (9%) |
| Not Sure | 10 (8%) |

Most (83%) of the learners believed that children with AIDS should be allowed to attend school. While 11(8.9%) thought they shouldn't be allowed, and 10 (8.1%) were not sure if such learners should be allowed to attend school or not.

2.4 Attitude toward Doctors with HIV/AIDS

| Doctors with HIV/AIDS should stop working with patients | Number of Respondents |
|---|-----------------------|
| Yes | 30 (24%) |
| No | 49 (40%) |
| Not Sure | 45 (36%) |

There were also mixed feelings amongst learners as to whether doctors who had HIV/AIDS should be allowed to continue on working with patients. 30 (24%) learners felt doctors ought to stop working. While 49 (40%) learners maintained that doctors should still be allowed to go on working with patients. 45 (36%) of the learners were not sure whether infected doctors should still attend to patients.

2.5 'Othering' of HIV/AIDS

There were learners who perceived HIV/AIDS as the disease for 'other' people. 58 (47%) of the learners maintained that AIDS was not their problem, implying that it is a problem to other people. 45 (36%) believed AIDS was their problem while 21 (17%) were not sure whether to regard HIV/AIDS as their problem or not. Despite the high percentage of learners arguing that AIDS is not their problem there seems to be a large group that feels the disease is also a concern to them.

In response to whether they knew anyone infected with the virus 81 (65%) said they did not know anyone with HIV/AIDS. 32 (26%) knew someone with the virus while 11 (9%) were not sure whether they knew anyone infected with HIV/AIDS or not. Since the majority of learners argued that they did not know one infected with HIV/AIDS this maybe the reason why some learners felt HIV/AIDS was not their problem.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the respondents in this study seemed to have a knowledge base on HIV/AIDS. The learners knew the various ways in which one could get infected with HIV. Such as through unprotected sex, sharing of the same needle, blood transfusion with contaminated blood and from mother to child during pregnancy or breastfeeding. There were a few who thought HIV could be transmitted through sharing toilets, cups or hugging an infected person. Learners were also aware that HIV could be sexually transmitted from males to females and from men to men. Most of them also knew that there was no cure for the disease. Only a few thought AZT and antibiotics could cure the

disease. There were different opinions in relation to whether one can judge from the physical changes if a friend or relative had HIV/AIDS. A few learners thought they could determine if a person had AIDS if they were thin, had sores or hair loss. Sources of information on HIV/AIDS were the school, friends and home and a few learners also argued that they got information about the disease from church.

There learners attitude toward people with HIV/AIDS was mostly positive. The majority of learners felt they could accept and befriend people even if they knew they had the disease. They also argued that children with the virus should be allowed to attend school. The only difference in attitude was with regards to doctors with HIV/AIDS working with patients. Where, most respondents felt such doctors should stop working with patients. A number of learners also argued that they did not know anyone with HIV/AIDS and did not regard the disease as their problem. There is therefore the 'othering' of HIV/AIDS where it is regarded as a disease for other people.

Learners seem to be knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS and the question is why this knowledge has not led to significant behavior change. This study therefore tried to understand youth and their sexual identity construction in different contexts.

Appendix 9 Description of the Four Schools

The four schools used in this study belonged to four different education departments prior to the 1990's (see page 46). The schools were important in this study as one of the critical considerations in understanding sexual identity construction is examining the contexts in which this construction takes place. In this study, schools are viewed as one of the important arenas where school identities and sexual identities are made and remade and where the youth come to develop and make sense of their sexual selves. This does not imply that other institutions such as the home do not influence the youth's identity construction, but in this study I focused on the school since this is where most children spend at least six hours of their day time. In this section therefore I briefly describe the four schools that were used in the study. The information about the school comes from my observation and conversations I had with some members of staff in the schools, such as, the principal, deputy, or secretary, class teachers and caretakers.

I provide this brief account of the schools as a way of situating my respondents. The description also serves to locate these respondents in a time and place. The geographical location of the schools is examined as it impacts on the socio economic status of people in this area. This is due to the resettling of people during the apartheid era, where people were located taking into consideration whether they were the working class or middle class and according to the racial groups.

1.2 Radford secondary school

Radford secondary school is located in the northern suburbs of Cape Town, about 40km from the city centre. It is a big school with approximately 1560 learners. There are 65 teachers in the school. 43 are paid by the Department of Education and 22 by the governing-body. There are five members in the administration. These are the principal's personal secretary, the general administrator, two secretaries whose duties include typing and organizing the schools data and the secretary of finance. There are also four men and three ladies who are responsible for the cleanliness of the school surroundings.

Learners are also given responsibilities to assist in the smooth running of the school. There is a learner representative council, where in each grade three learners are selected. The learners act as the eyes and the ears of the teachers. There are also thirty learners (15 girls and 15 boys) per grade, known as grade counselors. Their duty is to be around corridors, especially during exchange of classes, to ensure that other learners go to their respective classes.

The school is a predominantly white school. Between 70-75% of the learner population is white, with about 20-25% being coloured, Indian and black. The school is argued to be bilingual, but the most predominant language is Afrikaans. Each grade has three classes. Afrikaans is used as a medium of instruction in two classes and one uses English. For each class learners are grouped using one of the two systems. Learners are grouped either based on academic excellence where top achievers are allocated to one class or on subject choice. It was clear that the school emphasizes academic excellence, evident by their grade 12 pass rate for the past five years which has been 7% or 8% above the provincial aggregate. Academic competence is also instilled in learners through acknowledgement of those who perform well in their studies. For example, at the junior level learners who get 80% and above are given blazers that have academic colors. At senior a level, such blazers are given to learners who get 75% and above.

Achievement in sports is also acknowledged. Learners who are achievers in sports are given blazers with provincial colours. The school also has various sports, such as girl's netball, hockey, golf and rugby in winter. The summer sports are cricket, athletics, tennis and drum majorettes. Amongst these sports, rugby is the most liked by students and is played at both the super league and premier league. Trophies in sports and other competitions that the students have participated in are displayed on the main entrance to the administration building.

The dress code is an important element in the school and learners are not allowed to wear any tops or sweaters that are not part of the school uniform. There are different attires for summer and winter. In summer, girls are expected to wear dresses and open neck shirts, while in winter they wear either the dress or grey pants with a shirt, a tie and a blazer. Boys wear grey trousers and white shirts throughout the year. In summer however, boys are allowed to wear open neck shirts and in winter they have to wear ties and blazers. Exception is made for grade twelve learners. They are allowed to wear their matric tops on a Friday and during exams. There are also different uniforms used on occasions such as touring. It would seem therefore that the uniform is part of ones identification with the school.

During the data collection period, which was in winter some girls wore their dresses while others wore their grey pants. The dresses were to a certain extent individualized, where some girls had dresses long while others wore them quite short. Girls wore grey pants which also differed in that some had their pants loose and some tight. Though girls were not allowed to wear make-up, some wore it light. Boys wore grey pants and white shirts and there was no uniqueness in how they wore them.

During my observations in the school, teachers, especially the women were dressed in smart casual clothes, while most male teachers had formal clothes. The principal and deputy had on suits while the other male teachers had on formal pants, a shirt and some wore a tie. The female teachers dressed differently, some of them wearing pants while others wore long or short skirts and tops that differed in length. Most of these female teachers wore their make up.

In classrooms, the desks were arranged in rows, with the teacher's desk at the front. Girls occupied most of the front desks while boys were mostly at the back. There seemed to be an open interaction between learners and teachers in the classes I observed. This interaction was hierarchical in the sense that the teacher was regarded as in charge. Within the classroom interaction where the main topic was on careers, learners mentioned the careers they were hoping to follow after grade twelve and gave reasons for their choice. The teacher listened and discussed with them some of the subjects they ought to do that related to their choice of career. Some of the choices the girls and boys made were similar such as following a career in the medical field, working with the forensic department and engineering. However, generally boys chose technical courses such as mechanical, and electrical engineering and construction management, while girl's choices were mostly humanistic, such as being a psychologist.

During interval, learners were seen in different groups, some mixed and some same sex groups. Some of the learners could be seen around the corridors and toilets. Often, groups of boys were seen behind the classrooms. After school, some learners walked home in groups while some waited at the school gate to be fetched by someone. In most cases adults, who could be a parents or guardians, were seen picking up some learners. Some boys and girls were also seen walking home together in couples. A number of the boys carried two school bags. My assumption was that one bag belonged to the girl they were walking with. Both girls and boys also acknowledged this gesture in the focus group discussion, where boys said they often carried their girlfriend's bags, implying that it was one of their roles in the relationship.

1.3 Heritage secondary school

Heritage secondary school is also a big school, located in the southern suburbs of Cape Town about 30km from the city centre. The population here comprises both middle class and the working class. The school is a predominantly coloured school. There were 1400 learners and 45 teachers in the school. Ten parents also assist in the day-to-day running of the school. Their duties range from invigilating learners during examination, keeping learners busy when teachers are absent from school or running the tuck shop and raising funds for one project or the other.

The school is bilingual, as both learners and teachers use English and Afrikaans interchangeably. In most grades, there is one Afrikaans medium class and the rest use English as a medium of instruction. For example, out of the eight grade nine classes in the school, seven use English as the medium of instruction and one used Afrikaans. The school takes pride in its academic performance and sports. In the waiting room at the administration building, there are trophies and framed pictures of learners' best performances academically and in sports.

In the school, there is also emphasis on learners wearing the appropriate school uniform. Those learners who wore tops that were not part of their school uniform were seen hiding them in their school bags before they got to the school gate. In the morning before school started, there was always someone waiting at the gate to ensure that learners had on their proper uniform. Some of the tops that were not part of the uniform were removed from the learners and kept in the school's bookshop until schools closed at the end of term. Boys were expected to wear grey trousers with white shirts, while girls had on either the grey trousers with white shirts or black skirts with white shirts. Some of the girls also had tracksuits on, and some, especially the Muslim girls wore pants under their dresses. These tracksuits had to be worn in winter, and because I collected my data in winter, a number of learners had them on. Both boys and girls wore blazers, jerseys or sweaters on cold days.

Though the color of the girl's uniform was similar, the girls had to a certain extent personalized their uniform as it looked differently on each of them. Some girls had their skirts short and tight, more like mini skirts, while other girls had theirs at knee length. There seemed to be a large number of Muslim girls in the school. These girls were identified through their headscarfs. What was interesting though was that on any given day I would see some with their headscarf's being worn and the following day the same girl would have her hair brushed and uncovered. It was therefore difficult to say who was or was not Muslim just through their dressing. The head scarves, it would seem, were part of the days look for some girls rather than it being an identifier of any religious affiliation. Boys all wore grey pants and white shirts. What looked different though, was the deliberate level of neatness in their dressing. For example, some boys had their white shirts well ironed and tucked neatly in their pants while some boys wore their shirts loosely tucked. It also seemed that this dress mode differentiated the boys in that those with loosely tucked shirts were perceived as 'more cool' by the girls, while the other boys were viewed as the serious type.

The individuality of the learners was also demonstrated in the different hairstyles they had. Most boys had their hair short or had a particular haircut. Some of the boys applied gel on their hair and combed it in a particular style. One got the sense that much attention was given to the hair so that it stands in a

particular way. Girls also had different hairstyles, with some letting their long hair hang loosely, while some tied it up. Girls also wore alic bands and combed their hair in various styles. Only a few had their hair short. A number of girls wore very light make up or powdered their face.

Teachers also dressed in various ways. During my data collection the principal and the deputy always dressed formally, while other members of staff were very casual. Some male teachers had on jeans and casual tops and a few had on more formal pants with shirts. The ladies had either pants or dresses. Some of them dressed in a smart casual way, while some were sporty or had on jeans or casual pants. Most of the ladies wore make-up, and their hair was combed in different styles.

During the intervals, both boys and girls stood around in the corridors while some sat on the benches near the classrooms or on the lawn. As learners were not allowed to leave the school premises during school hours, a number of learners stood by the fence chatting to people outside the school. A few boys played soccer in the playgrounds. Learners also crowded around the tuck shop at every interval pushing one another so they could buy something to eat, because when the bell rang for them to go back to class, the tuck shop was immediately closed.

In the classrooms, the learner's desks were arranged so that they sat facing one another. The teacher's desk was in front, but on the far right against the wall. There was no specific seating arrangement for the boys and girls who seemed to spread throughout the classroom. What I noticed is that, friends often set next to one another. I observed a number of Life Orientation lessons in a grade nine class. In these lessons, most of the issues covered were on the scientific knowledge of HIV/AIDS. For example in one lesson discussion was on the types of HIV, referred to as HIV1 and HIV2. The argument was that it is difficult for scientists to find a cure for the virus because of the different streams of HIV. Where, a vaccine for one stream may not work for another stream of HIV. Learner's questions were more on seeking clarification on the different HIV streams.

During this lesson, learners were also given a comprehension task. While most of the learners were busy working, there was one boy who sat and did nothing. The teacher recognized him and tried to find out what the problem was but he did not respond. The teacher ended up asking him if he had problems with his girlfriend and he said no. The teacher eventually gave up questioning him. In this case the teacher assumed that the boy had problems in his relationship.

1.4 De Hoop secondary school

De Hoop secondary school is a smaller school compared the two described above. The school was 33 years old in 2004. During the time of data collection, there were about 860 learners. The principal argued that in the past they had 1200 learners. He pointed out that the number of learners enrolled was decreasing because of the new housing schemes in other areas around Cape Town, which led to families relocating. Due to this decrease in enrolment, some of the classes were not used and these were being rented out to organizations that managed and conducted technical courses such as the electrical and marketing for out of school students.

The school is located in a predominantly coloured Afrikaans working class community, with large numbers of unemployed people. The school is located in an area characterized by high rates of crime and various gang groups. Due to this, there is an electrical fence around the school and a security guard has been employed. The gate is also kept locked and the security guard is responsible for letting people in and out of the school. The gates are also locked to ensure that learners do not leave school during lessons. Some of the reasons for this tight security measure were that, in past, there were incidents of gang members entering and shooting learners in the school premises.

Most of the learners were argued to come from single parented families or were living with their grandparents. Exact statistics were not available because learner's profiles were not yet compiled. The principal also argued that they often had cases of children who have been abused at home. In such cases, the school seeks help from the clinic in the area or social workers are called in to assist.

The school is mainly Afrikaans speaking and therefore all lessons were in Afrikaans. Both teachers and learners also communicated in Afrikaans, both in and out of class. Due to this, my observations in the schools were limited to what I could see and get through asking some questions. The school also places emphasis on academic performance, as they acknowledge that they need to improve their results because their matric pass rate was 73% in 2003. For academic motivation, people from institutions of higher learning such as the universities in the area are invited to talk to the learners.

The school takes pride in the achievements in sports, such as, having the best chess players in the Western Cape. They have learners who play for the under seventeen soccer team. Learners also participate in sports like netball and volley ball.

Learners are expected to wear their school uniform, grey pants and white shirts for boys and skirts with white shirts for girls but this was not strictly adhered to by learners. Girls had the choice of

wearing grey pants and white shirts. The learners were also expected to have on blazers and tops that were part of the school uniform. During my observation in the school, however, a large number of learners wore different colors of fashionable tops, from different brands, such as Nike, billabong and others. The uniform was therefore personalized by putting on this tops that were different from what other learners had. Girls also personalized their uniform, as some had their skirts tight and short. They also had different hairstyles. Most boys and girls carried colorful bags, and those with plain colors had engraved on them phrases from songs and names of different musical artists. Boys also personalized their dress code. Most boys had their shirts hanging over the grey pants or loosely tucked into the trousers. Some boys also had designer jackets on.

1.5 Zingisani secondary school

Zingisani high school is located in a black township. All the learners in the school are black and Xhosa is the main language used in the school. The majority of teachers are also black and there are a few coloured teachers. It is a small school with about 800 learners. In the school premises, there are only classes and no sports fields.

There is expectation of learners to be attired in the proper school uniform when they come to school. For boys this meant grey pants and white shirts and for girls skirts with white shirts or grey pants and shirts. Most of the boys however, wore their uniform in different ways. Some had their shirts hanging over their trousers with sleeves rolled up, while others tucked either the front part or the back part of their shirts in their trousers. Most boys were dressed carelessly, as this was considered 'cool' by both girls and boys. A few also dressed neatly with shirts well tucked into their pants. Boys also had different hairstyles, with some having their haircut very short, others had s-curl (hair short and curly due to processing) while some kept a short afro. Girls also wore their dresses in different ways. A number of girls had their skirts so short and tight they would hardly bend. A couple of girls also wore black lycra pantyhose underneath their short skirts, and this made them look neat and quite different from other girls in the school. Most girls had also powdered their faces and had different types of hairstyles.

Female teachers dressed casually. Most of them wore pants and tops or dresses. A few men were dressed formally with pants, shirts and ties, while others were dressed in their jeans or casual clothes. The principal was always dressed formally on the days I was present at the school.

Time and punctuality were an important element in the school, especially in the morning when school starts. Gates were locked in the morning when assembly started, so those learners who were late stood

at the gate until it was open after assembly. During lessons, the gate was also locked and opened when learners exchanged classes. This, I was told was done so as to avoid the interruption of lessons by learners walking into class late. There was a security guard who opened and closed the gate, and ensured that learners did not leave the school premises. The learners were only allowed out during the lunch hour, an element of management that seemed to create organizational challenges for members of staff, as not all learners came back on time, or even came back to school after the lunch hour.

Every morning during my data collection period, there was always a large group of learners late for school. One morning, I walked passed a group of boys, who were late to school, exchanging two cigarettes amongst the six of them. It was also common in the school that boys would go to the toilets during interval and smoke. Smoking in this school seemed to be one way of affirming ones masculinity. During my observation and talking to a few teachers, I also found that smoking was not common amongst girls. My assumption was that even if girls did smoke, they did not do it while at school.

The boys at this school were also perceived to be the untidy ones, while girls were thought of as neat. For example, during observation in one grade nine class, the teacher came in and her table was in a mess with books and papers strewn on top. There were also a few plastic plates. She immediately assumed it was the boys who were responsible she proceeded to scold them for being untidy.

One morning, as I stood with the learners by the gate a young man, tall and well build walked passed the school. The girls I was standing next to alerted their friends to look at this man. They proceeded to comment about his body, and his clothes, that he wore a Levi jean and expensive shoes because they were Nike shoes. One of the girls commented, 'he is hot'. A few boys also commented about his shoes.

Conclusion

Within these four schools sexuality was expressed mostly in the form of dressing. Where, even though there was expectation for learners to wear similar uniforms, the learners personalized these uniforms to express their sexualities. This differed in each learner. Some were neatly dressed while some wore their uniform in a sloppy way. Due to the normality of heterosexuality in the schools, during my observation there were no instances where issues of heterosexuality were discussed. Even in one school where one learner was perceived as homosexual there was silence on this issue. He was seen as different but also gendered as male because of the normality of peoples gendered being in the

schools. It seemed the learners and the teachers knew the rules in their social contexts and did not question them due to their assumed normality both at school and in the larger social context.